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FROM

THE PHARMACISTS OF GREAT BRITAIN

TO

THE CHICAGO COLLEGE OF PHARMACY.

1871–1872.

WEALTH AND LABOUR.

Chichester, Frederick Richard.

WEALTH AND LABOUR.

A Novel.

BY LORD B*******/

AUTHOR OF "MASTERS AND WORKMEN," "FARCE OF LIFE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY,

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WEALTH AND LABOUR.

CHAPTER I.

It was a sunny day in June, and recent showers had made the high grass stand rank and fragrant in the meadows. Gracefully the dust-like blossoms trembled on its full tops, as they were fitfully waved by the light west wind, which often as it passed, threw over the fields, the faint shadows of the fleecy clouds it bore across the sun. The songs of the small birds were cheerful in the hedge-rows; a lark sang high in the clear fresh air, and the butterflies sported in curious mazes, over the flowering heath, and golden-blossomed furze.

But there was no creature under that bright

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sky, who more rejoiced in the return of summer, than a fair young girl, who, as the sun was declining, passed with a light and rapid step along a narrow path in the cultivated fields, and then carolling as she went, ascended the narrow strip of open down, which divided the meadows and corn lands from the high sand-stone cliffs overhanging the sea.

The direct way from the farm-house whence she came to her home in the large manufacturing and trading town, where she resided, was by a high road she had left at a gate about half-a-mile from the downs; but the afternoon was so bright, and the fields so gay, that she too, like the butterflies, took a devious course, sometimes stopping to gather the flowering thorn in the hedges, or to look up, with a feeling almost amounting to devotion, on the wide expanse of the sky. But she tarried longest when she reached the summit of the down, from whence the wide and deep blue sea, and a long line of rocky and irregular coast, was first

to be seen appearing to rise towards the sky, until they vanished far away. But though the rocks and promontories were bold and picturesque, she never looked towards the land. The glittering, foaming, restless waves, had the only charm for her. She stood still, and watched them breaking in long lines on the shallow beach, as the tide rolled gently in, and then, fascinated by their gushing murmurs, to which, from childhood, she had loved to listen, she sprang down from rock to rock, till she reached the sands of a little bay, half encircled by the tall old cliffs, from whence many a mass of rock had fallen to fret and break the waters.

She knew she could safely remain there, another half-hour, before the rising waves would cover the path round the point between her and the town; and with a feeling of pure and visionary delight, almost childish in its innocence, she sat down upon a fragment of the cliff, to gaze upon the moving waters, and

listen to their measured sound, as they broke upon the sand. From the remotest antiquity, the voice of the ocean has had a charm for the dwellers on its shores, and what the Alps are to the Swiss, the sea is to the islander.

But that day, even whilst the young girl seemed to watch the coming tide she forgot its beauty in other thoughts, and perhaps it had been to indulge those thoughts, undisturbed, and not to admire the many-coloured ocean, that she had turned from the direct path, to linger in that quiet nook. She thought of a playfellow of her childhood, now far away, across the sea, who, in other years, had often gathered shells for her on those sands, when their merry voices made the rocks echo to their glee. Even that day she wove pleasant fancies as to her future life, although in truth more clouds than sun-shine were above its doubtful horizon.

But Mary Thornton was scarcely twenty-one, and though many girls of the same age would

have been miserable in her position, she had a natural elasticity of spirit, and a delight in usefulness, which made her find that happiness in her own heart and her constant industry, which the external circumstances of her life appeared to deny to her.

The sun had set when she arose to resume her way; but though the place was very lonely, habit had made it so familiar to her, that she felt no fear; and she had no apprehension even when she heard a man whistling, clear and shrill, beyond the projecting promontory, which hid him from her view. A sudden turn round this barrier brought her on to the long open sands, over which lay her shortest way home, and she then saw a gentleman standing only a few paces from her, watching a dog, as it swam, with his stick in its mouth, towards him.

Mary Thornton instantly recognised him, and her first impulse on doing so, was to turn back, although there was nothing alarming in

his appearance, for he was young, and what is commonly called, handsome. He was probably about six and twenty, tall, athletic, and of a florid complexion. But he, too, saw the girl, and, guessing her intention, was at her side in a minute.

"No, no, Mary," he said, laughing, and showing his fine teeth, "you are not going to double like a hare, and escape in that way, I promise you. I heard you had been in the village, and as I thought you would go home by the sands, I ran down here with all speed, to meet you. Now your father has forbid me to come to his house, I hardly ever see you, and we must have a little quiet conversation together, before I part from you."

He took the girl's hand as he spoke; but she snatched it hastily away, and blushed, half with anger, half with shame, as she replied—

"I want no conversations with you in such a place as this, Mr. Mallory. What will

people think, if they see us walking here alone?"

"Let them think what they please," answered the young man, laughing, and stooping down to get a glimpse of the pretty, indignant face, which Mary turned away from him as far as possible, whilst she hurried on towards her home. "What new fancy has come into your head, little coz?" cried the gentleman, in a sneering tone, "you have often enough walked here before this, both with me, and my brother Edward, and thought ho harm of it, then."

"I was a child in those days," said the girl, sharply.

"Ah! and you are a young lady now," returned her companion, in a tone of mock respect. "I quite understand; you think when people get older, they must become proud and conceited. I thought you had been above such nonsense."

Mr. Mallory took Miss Thornton's hand as

he ceased speaking; but again she got away from him, and hurried on still quicker than before.

"Don't be silly, Mary," he said, "don't let your father make a slave of you; for depend upon it, you will never enjoy life, if you set up for a prude."

"I never wish to be a prude," answered the girl, with increased anger; but she did not slacken her pace.

"Well, what do you mean to be then, my pretty cousin?" returned the young man, in a more serious voice. "Are you a coquette? I begin to suspect that my brother Edward made love to you before he went away, and that is the reason you have always been so cruel to me."

"Mr. Oswald, you ought to be ashamed of talking to me in this manner," said the young lady; and she, for the first time, turned and looked her tormenter full in the face, with an expression of the greatest scorn.

But her eyes flashed so brightly, and her cheeks flushed with so beautiful a glow, that the young man thought much more of her loveliness than he did of her anger.

"Bravo! my little cousin!" he cried. "I did not believe that any living creature could have put you in such a passion. But I cannot understand why the idea of Edward's making love to you, should enrage you, except I have guessed right. But though you may have had a childish flirtation with him, when you were scarcely into your teens, you ought to have forgotten him long ago. A poor, beggarly, younger brother, is no match for you!"

"He is your own brother, sir!" answered Mary Thornton.

"Yes, to my sorrow; but luckily I am his senior, and thus heir to all my father's broad acres, and Mr. Edward having offended that old gentleman, will be cut off with a sixpence. And that is just as it ought to be, for I believe he always hated me from the bottom of his

heart, ever since he learnt the difference between eldest and youngest, and his father told him, he must depend on his own abilities for his support. I have no doubt, he has wished I might break my neck out a hunting, a hundred times; but he shall never step into the family estates if I can help it, and as long as I live, there shall be open war between us. He has thought proper to go off to America; and his father has banished him from his house for ever."

"Oh, Mr. Oswald, how can you say such cruel things!" exclaimed Mary, eagerly. "You know very well, that Mr. Edward does not hate you; he is too good to hate any living creature."

"Oh yes, good!" returned Oswald Mallory, with a sneer. "Never ran in debt, and never got into rows at Oxford, or elsewhere; never smokes, nor drinks, nor goes a hunting! a most exemplary young man. The pet of old ladies, and the admiration of his tutors; a

most laborious, studious, proper, hypocritical young man, and all because he is a younger son, and has his way to make in the world. Thank Heaven, I was not born to be such a living falsehood!"

"Indeed, Mr. Oswald, many people think your brother has been treated very hardly," replied the girl.

"They do, do they?" retorted her companion. "That's not my fault. What did I want with a younger brother?"

"For shame, Mr. Oswald! how can you speak in this way, when you have only one! what would you have said, if your father had had half-a-dozen children?"

"Younger children, in my opinion, ought to be drowned like puppies," answered Oswald, laughing. "They are only encumbrances on an estate, to keep a man poor all his life."

"But surely, when there is family affection, people don't all think so much about money," said the girl, in a soft voice.

"Oh, affection!" cried the gentleman. "It may be all very fine, for little innocent girls like you, to dream about family affection; but what affection can a man have for a swarm of brothers and sisters, who have no idea on earth, but to envy his priority, and get as much of his inheritance as they can. Affection is quite out of the question, between people who are longing for each other's money. For my part, I hate all younger brothers; for they are proud as beggars, and greedy as a sponge. Master Edward detested me from the day my father gave me a pony, and took me out a hunting with him."

"Indeed, Mr. Oswald, I am astonished how you ever came to think so unjustly of your brother!" said Mary, earnestly.

"Oh, it was quite natural!" was the reply. "All the servants knew it! Old Cobb, the huntsman, told me so; and when we were little boys, Edward always wanted my things; and I remember my father flogged him for

riding my pony, when I had the measles. He never asked to mount it again; but he hated and envied me the more, old Cobb said."

"Poor Mr. Edward;" returned the girl. "You should not have listened to such people, Mr. Oswald, when they tried to set you against your brother. You ought to know him better, than to believe that he either hates, or envies you."

"He does not, you tell me!" was the sharp reply; "then if ever he comes to England again, he shall be taught to do both. But you seem mighty well informed, my pretty cousin, about my brother's ways of thinking. He told you, I suppose, that I was a tyrant, and used him barbarously."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Oswald," said Mary firmly," he never said a word against you in my hearing."

"That proves what a hypocrite he must be!" cried Oswald. "But I cannot allow

you, my pretty Mary, to waste your best days, in thinking of a worthless fellow like that, who has forgotten you, long ago. You are too good for him, and I am resolved you shall love me, and nobody else in the wide world."

Mary neither looked up, nor made any reply.

"Yes," he continued, "you are above twenty-one now, quite a woman, and you can understand me, when I vow that you shall be mine, and mine in spite of all opposition."

"For shame, Mr. Oswald, how can you forget yourself so, as to talk in this wild way," answered the girl indignantly.

"Wild indeed!" he cried, grasping her hand, so that she could not withdraw it, "I mean what I say, Mary! I love you, as I have never loved any one else, and rather than give you up to another, I would see him dead; even though my rival were my own brother. But I am resolved to be beforehand with him, in securing my wife, as well as at my birth,"

and he laughed; "you will give me your heart and your hand, my pretty little Mary, and make me the happiest fellow alive."

"What madness, for the eldest son of Sir Thomas Mallory, Baronet, of Stoke Court, to talk about love and marriage, to Mary Thornton, the daughter of a broken down gentleman, a poor Custom House officer," replied the girl with infinite disdain. "But she knows the meaning of such a suit, and she begs to tell Mr. Oswald, that though he may give free indulgence to all his whims in other ways, he ought not to forget that Mary Thornton's mother was his kinswoman, and that she has thus a right to his forbearance and respect, even if he denies them to her, as a woman, and an orphan."

"Respect!" cried the heir of Sir Thomas; "what greater respect can I show any woman, than by telling her, that I am confoundedly in love with her. You are right to be a little coy, Mary; I like you all the better for it,

only don't carry it too far. I have told you how much I adore you; I have told you I am determined to win you, even in defiance of yourself, and both our fathers; so now you must think the matter over, and I shall see you again as soon as possible. I will try to be patient till then, though I have long been perfectly miserable whilst you are out of my sight. You need not tell *your* father of our having met to-day, till I can get *my* father's consent, and then I am sure he will make no further objections, but be overjoyed, that his little daughter can make so good a match."

"Indeed, Mr. Oswald, you quite misunderstand me," said Miss Thornton, with a severity and dignity of which she rarely appeared capable. "I am not such a child, as you seem to think, and I never can, nor will, accept your addresses."

"Oh, you think so now because you have been brought up to think me much above you, but you will soon get over such false modesty,"

answered the young man laughing complacently.

"It is not that!" persisted the girl.

"Oh, nonsense," replied Oswald. "I know you love me in your heart, only you hardly comprehend yet what love is. But I shall teach you. I have no fear on that score, my pretty cousin, so you may protest indifference as fervently, and as long as you please, without my believing you in the least."

"But, Mr. Oswald—"

"But, Mary—pretty Mary, how charming you look to-day. The very mention of love has made you quite another creature."

"For shame, sir—for shame!" cried the girl, breaking from him as he attempted to pass his arm round her waist, "if my father were here, you durst not insult me thus."

"I shall come to ask your pardon before long; and, in the meantime, I beg you not to be too hard-hearted," cried Mallory, laughing gaily, as he sprang over a rail, and began to

ascend the shelving cliff. "There is your father's friend, Captain Sayers, coming down the hill in search of you, and I have no wish to enjoy his society, so farewell, my little angel. Ponto, Ponto," he cried, whistling to his dog.

The spaniel leapt after his master, and both had vanished amongst the rocks before the stout elderly gentleman, whose apparition in the distance had put Mr. Mallory to flight, had approached near enough to recognise him.

Mary Thornton was first conscious how violently her heart was beating with anger and mortification when she was left alone. Neither the beauty of the glassy sea, nor the breaking waves at her feet, had any attraction for her then. The charms of inanimate nature had become invisible, when the first strong gust of passion had ruffled the tranquillity of her young heart. Gladly would she have reached home without further interruption; but there was only one path before her, and by

that, Captain Sayers had already commenced his descent, and having seated himself on a large stone, crossed his fat hands over the ivory handle of his stick, and rested his round chin thereon, was patiently awaiting her.

To avoid her father's kind old friend, without rudeness, was impossible, and rudeness formed no part of Mary Thornton's character, even when the gratification of her wishes was to be gained by it ; so, endeavouring to look as composed as possible, she nodded and smiled to the Captain, and began to ascend the cliff.

"My humble service to you, Miss Thornton," he said, raising his hat very courteously, as soon as she was within hearing; "a lovely day—a very lovely day, almost as bright as the days when I was young. Ah, how I envy you, coming up the hill as nimble as a goat. Charming, charming ! I cannot do that now, Miss Thornton—breath short—pulse quick—bulk a *leetle* too heavy. You must excuse me,

that I stopped short, for I knew it would be no easy matter to get up again. Up hill work —an excellent proverb—very hard work it is to many people, in many ways, and to me in particular. I have preferred sitting at the bottom of the hill all my life, instead of toiling to climb it."

"But that is not your position at present, certainly," answered the girl, laughing.

"Very true—very true," said the Captain, "and yet I have further to mount again, I perceive, than I intended. Footing rather insecure too—my boots slippery as glass—pebbles as round as marbles—most extraordinary coincidence, most uncommonly extraordinary, upon my word."

"Will you lean on my arm, sir?" asked Mary, tripping lightly up to his side.

"A thousand thanks, my dear Miss Thornton; but you must not be offended, if I take the liberty of declining your offer. Our feet might all slip together; and, in short," he

added, with a look of one who was hanging between heaven and earth, and had a horrible feeling of uncertainty about the soles of his feet, "I prefer, under such circumstances, depending on my own resources. You are a *leetle* too quick for me, Miss Thornton. Pray go on, and I will follow at my leisure. You will be so good as to wait for me at the top; I must point out to you the beautiful American vessel that has just come in with the tide; it is just at the mouth of the river—a most extraordinary coincidence."

Mary felt more interest about every thing American, than she chose to express, but she cheerfully promised to do all the old gentleman desired, and then quickly passed by him. Her consternation was great, when, as she nearly reached the top of the path, she heard a sudden cry, and a tumbling, and a rolling, and looking quickly round, beheld Captain Sayers, seated on the ground, and shooting, rather than sliding, down the cliff, with the velocity of an arrow.

Fortunately, in another instant, he reached a ledge of the bank, where his downward progress was arrested by a fragment of rock.

There he sat, in mute amazement and consternation, for a minute at least, looking around, as if he was unable to comprehend exactly, what had happened to him; his fat legs sticking up in the air, and his coat tails elevated in an opposite direction, against the bank behind him.

"No harm done, Miss Thornton, no harm done," he said, as soon as he had recovered his breath and his consciousness of his position, "it was very fortunate, I refused to take your arm, or you might have been here too."

"You must accept it now, however," she replied, "or I do not see how you are to get out of that crevice!" and though she wished to show the poor old gentleman every possible attention, she laughed as people very frequently do, when they are conscious they ought not, till the tears ran down her cheeks.

"Yes, laugh, my dear," he said with great good humour, "I have no doubt, I do look exceedingly odd, sitting here like a wedge; and I am fitted in exceedingly tight, I must confess. But no bones are broken, I rejoice to say, and if I may take the liberty of requesting the assistance of your arm, I think I may contrive to release myself. Slippery boots—rolling pebbles — most extraordinary coincidence, I came down like a ball on a house top. I never will attempt it again, as long as I live, that is quite certain."

"But you cannot stay here, sir," said Mary; "you must go up this once, in spite of all difficulties; lean then on me, and let us try what can be done."

So saying, she held out her delicate arm, which the Captain firmly grasped with his right hand, and resting on a rock with his left, he raised himself with considerable difficulty, out of the niche into which he had been wedged.

"Very kind of you indeed, Miss Thornton." he said, as he shook first one leg, and then the other, to convince himself that his bones were all in proper order. "I am perfectly shocked at being obliged to take such a liberty with a young lady, but upon my honour, it was a purely accidental circumstance, completely accidental; I just turned to look at the sea, and all at once I was spinning away like a rocket."

"Well this time we won't look behind us, and I have no doubt we shall get safely to the top. Had we not better set off," said Mary, gently.

"But, my stick—I have lost my walking stick," cried the Captain, in great dismay. "I set a high value on my stick, it was a present from Mr. Edward Mallory, before he went to America. I would not lose it for ten pounds."

But in vain they looked around, the stick was no where to be found, although the old

gentleman appeared so distressed by its loss, that Mary ran down in search of it, quite to the bottom of the cliff. After fruitlessly looking for it, for nearly half an hour, they at length resumed their way, and succeeded without other accident in regaining the high road. Captain Sayers forgot to look out for the American vessel, his mind was so entirely engrossed by the loss of his favorite walking stick, and though Mary did not fail to observe it, at the entrance of the river, she said not a word on the subject.

Before the naval officer and his young companion parted at the entrance of the town, he reminded her, that he should see her again that evening, at her father's house, and requested her, with some embarrassment, not to mention the little accident which had befallen him. The girl laughed, as she gave him her hand, and assured him of her silence. Thus they parted; Mary Thornton returned to

her home, and the Captain proceeded to a certain newsroom on the quay, where he usually awaited the arrival of the post, so as to have the first perusal of the "Morning Papers."

CHAPTER II

THE town of S—— is one of the largest and busiest ports in the North of England. Its fine harbour, and the rich mines in its neighbourhood, had not only rendered it the seat of extensive domestic and foreign traffic, but various manufactories had recently greatly increased its wealth, and largely added to its population. Such old inhabitants as Captain Sayers, who had known the place fifty years before, when it was little more than a fishing village, strange enough, always talked with regret, of its picturesque beauty in those days, of which, in truth, but little trace remained. Strangers said, it had then been chiefly remarkable for an ugly line of tall, meagre,

brick houses, staring out from the high cliff upon the sea, with bow windows, like goggle eyes, which defied all glare and sunshine. These ready-furnished dwellings had attracted thither in due season, such of the aristocratic inhabitants of the neighbouring county as desired to enjoy the luxury of sea baths, or the amusement of watering-place society ; and large rents were paid, for lodgings there, during the war, when heavy import duties made building a serious speculation. But these frightful erections were now all swept away, and terraces, and streets, and squares, of mock stone, with Grecian pillars and gothic gables, and fifty nondescript orders of architecture, in complete defiance of all Mr. Ruskin's laws of construction, replaced the ancient dwelling-places.

But there were likewise, less obtrusive streets, between the ambitious mansions on the upper cliff, and the thickly peopled busy avenues of the commercial town. These were composed of regular long lines of small houses,

inhabited by a class of persons, whose numbers have enormously multiplied, since the last century. These dwellings were there, as they are everywhere, remarkable for that neat gentility, which is one of the characteristics of laborious middle life in England.

And well is it for persons of this class, when the love of order and propriety is not corrupted by luxury, and lost, with increasing riches, in the empty glitter of vain ostentation.

The windows and the door-steps of one quiet street, called Temple Place, were all remarkably clean; but those of number 7, where Mary Thornton lived with her father, were brighter and more thickly garnished with flowers, than those of her neighbours.

Mr. Thornton was a man who had seen better days. The younger son of a respectable family, he had, in early life, been at the head of a flourishing mercantile house, in the neighbouring town. But he had always loved

pleasure; his wife being a distant relation of Sir Thomas Mallory had expensive connexions; he thought it due to her and himself, therefore, to keep an establishment far beyond his means; to keep this up, he speculated on credit, and he failed. He lost other people's money, and was called unfortunate. Mrs. Thornton died of a broken heart, and her husband by the influence of her relatives, had got a small place in the customs, on which he contrived to live. But he could not entirely give up his old habits of speculation; and he was, from time to time, engaged in transactions, the result of which, when unfavourable, was always kept secret from his daughter.

With the loss of fortune, he had ceased to be received as an associate in the society of the leading commercial men of the place, who had formerly been his frequent guests; yet such was his easy temper, that no one could perceive that his change of position had given him any serious mortification. But his

misfortune had made one great change in his secret heart. The impulse of Hope had left him for ever. His little speculations were in too small a way to excite such a feeling, though their failure deepened his despair. His daily wants were provided for by the drudgery of his daily life, so that he had no anxiety on that score; but there was no prospect beyond it to gladden or to cheer. He knew that he must toil on, for the rest of his days, like a leaden automaton, and this is a harder lot for a man of sanguine temperament to bear, than the dull and lethargic are capable of understanding. Such a life has the monotony of the tread-mill, without its disgrace, and breaks down the moral energy of the stoutest heart, by slow degrees, till apathy benumbs it, under the name of resignation, or it becomes the slave of the artificial excitement of some sensual indulgence. The bane of Mr. Thornton was brandy-and-water. It had, in moderation, been the first soother of his sorrows,

and gradually as his hopeless years stole on, his favorite mixture had become more potent, and its quantity increased. But well aware that his place in the Customs, and the means of living derived therefrom, depended on his character for sobriety, he was never seen, during the day, in a state of intoxication. He reserved his potations till the evening, when his friend Captain Sayers came four times a-week, at least, to play at backgammon, and partake of his favorite potation. Captain Sayers was one of those unfortunate labourers in the British Navy who, having had no interest, had never been posted, and after years of hard service, had retired on half-pay, to end his days in the town where he was born; fortunately with all his limbs, but with sundry wounds, which reminded him of the changes of the weather and of the emptiness of a subaltern's glory.

Yet he was still an enthusiast in his profession. He had served with Collingwood, and

seen Lord Nelson, and he considered a British man-of-war to be the eighth wonder of the world. He detested steam-boats, steam-carriages and steam-guns, and classed them altogether, as the most abominable innovations of modern times. He was a complete representative of the past; what he had admired in his youth, he admired in his old age, and every change which had occurred in society since his youth, he regarded as proofs of its decline. When a railroad was brought to the town of S——, he considered that its inhabitants were destined to speedy destruction. Manufactories sprung up, the commerce of the place was doubled, but free trade, and the repeal of the Navigation Laws, crowned the measure of his despair. After reading their announcement, he actually took to his bed, and did not re-appear at the news-room for more than a month; he was firmly persuaded that a national bankruptcy would be the consequence. Yet his

appetite did not diminish, neither did his corpulency decrease, and he consoled himself as usual, in Mr. Thornton's company.

Evening after evening, did little Mary Thornton sit beside these two old men, and mix their favorite beverage, and watch their game of backgammon, whilst she plied her needle in repairing the household linen, till the clock struck nine. At that hour she arose, kissed her father, and giving the Captain a tap with her little hand, or perhaps only a nod and a smile, she retired to her bed-room, and slept in peace and innocence, long unconscious of the evil her father was laying up in store for them both, by his nightly indulgence in strong drink, which the poor girl in her ignorance of the world, regarded as a mere matter-of-course, a thing which all men did.

Neither Thornton nor his friend were ever intoxicated, so they thought they were doing no wrong in enjoying the comforts of a warm

fire-side, a little bit of hot supper, and a few glasses of spirit and water, to enliven their conversation.

What they found to say to each other, during these nightly meetings, might seem extraordinary to many, but they were both great talkers, and essential differences in their ways of thinking, afforded them an inexhaustible fountain of amicable disputation. Captain Sayers, as we have already said, was a venerator of the past. Mr. Thornton saw all things admirable and great in the future. The one believed that the glories and the virtues and the prosperity of the nation, had forever departed; the other, was convinced, that the discoveries of science, and the progress of christian civilization and knowledge, would yet extend the power of England, beyond the calculations of all living men, and that her language, and her institutions, and her religion, would go forth from the sea-girt Isle, mes-

sengers of great joy, till universal peace, and the interchange of property and knowledge would unite the inhabitants of the whole earth, in a bond of love and of prosperity.

At the expression of such ideas, the old Captain would laugh outright, and swear that the glory and the strength of every nation was past, when it preferred money to fighting.

"You wish to prove Napoleon was right when he called us a nation of shop-keepers," he cried, his face getting several shades redder than usual, on the evening after he had been with Miss Thornton, at the sea-side; "but I tell you, sir, John Bull is a fighting fellow. He is a brave fellow, and has done many gallant things in his time. And he will do them again, sir, you may say what you like to the contrary. He has not become such a sneaking, drivelling dotard, yet, as the members of the Peace Association want us to believe. I have seen him fight, sir! I have been in the battle of Trafalgar, sir."

"I have heard so before," answered Thornton, quietly sipping his brandy-and-water.

"I am not ashamed to say it," rejoined the Commander, with increasing energy; "and though I may have said it before, a man may repeat such a thing twenty times without blushing. John Bull showed he could fight then, sir, and there were none of those confounded smoking chimneys, nor paddle-boxes to spoil the grandeur of the scene. That was a glorious picture, sir, when the two gallant fleets came up with full-spread sails, to dispute the empire of the world! Then might an Englishman be proud of the British Navy, and the colours which have dared the battle and the breeze. But no man will ever look on such a scene again. Steam has destroyed the glories of the British Navy."

"It has only extended its power, my good friend," said Thornton, without raising his eyes to look at the man he addressed. "You will see wonders, if ever we have another war.

But heaven avert such a calamity from mankind in general, for the science of destruction is now brought to such fearful perfection, that all good men must shrink from the horrors which war must now occasion. And the only sure way to escape war, is to be ever ready for self-defence."

"With a parcel of smoking steamers, and a paltry, half trained militia, composed of run-away apprentices, and starved mechanics!" cried the old Commander, whilst his eyes flashed furiously, "The wooden walls of old England were once the only defence she had need of."

"But science has changed the character of war," said the Custom House Officer.

"Confound science!" exclaimed Sayers. "You peace-mongers always bring up science on every occasion. When science has paid the National Debt, I shall begin to respect it, but not till then."

"Science has discovered the gold mines in Australia."

"And what the devil is old England the better for that? it will only lessen the value of the sovereign in our pockets, and be squandered by a pack of desperadoes and adventurers, instead of enriching the nation, or even the colony. Why has not Government taken possession of the mines, aud worked them for the public benefit, instead of allowing them to be plundered, and to become the means of ruin to the fairest of our colonies. This gold would have been applied by a good and a wise Government to pay off the National Debt, sir, to lessen our taxation, sir, and prompt regulations might have prevented the fearful crimes and debauchery, which sudden riches have made common amongst the miners."

"Something, no doubt, will speedily be done," rejoined Thornton, mildly.

"Yes, speedily," was the hasty rejoinder, "when it is too late! You men of science

are always too late, where moral energy is required. You talk too much, and act too little."

"As to talking, Captain Sayers," began his host, whose temper was, at length, ruffled, for he felt the truth of the Captain's last accusation, "I must say, you had better measure your own language."

"What do you mean to insinuate?" cried the old officer, starting up from his seat, with as much rapidity as his age and weight permitted.

"I insinuate nothing," said Thornton, now also rising. "I don't deal in insinuations; but if you dislike to hear the plain truth, that you are a prodigious talker, you had better not accuse other people of that failing."

"Sir, you are insulting," cried the man of war, trying in vain to repress his passion. "I am your guest, or—"

"Oh, sir, pray don't make that an excuse, I beg," retorted Thornton, losing all command

of his temper. "Do and say just what you please, without considering where you are. That can make no difference."

"No, sir, no," cried Sayers, "this dispute must be settled in another place. I cannot say all I wish in a lady's presence; but you may rely upon it, Mr. Thornton, I shall never set my foot into this house again, till I have received a proper apology."

"Yes, yes," retorted his host, "it is quite plain that you have had a little too much brandy. You will understand the matter better to-morrow morning."

"How is it possible that two such old friends as you are, can quarrel in this ridiculous manner, about nothing?" said Mary, who, accustomed to act as peacemaker between the two irritable old men, now thought it necessary to interpose. "It is my opinion, that you have both had too much brandy-and-water, and I am sure neither of you know what you are quarrelling about."

"Not very clearly, certainly," said Thornton, whose hand his daughter had taken, with her soothing and caressing manner. "Will you explain, Sayers?"

"I don't feel very certain as to the origin of the dispute," answered the Captain, in a thick voice. "But it appeared to me, you said something insulting—perhaps Miss Mary can explain."

"I will explain all to-morrow, if you wish it," said the girl, laughing, "and in the meantime, you must obey my orders. Give Captain Sayers your hand, father. I am sure you never meant to insult him."

"Never, upon my word of honour," was her father's reply.

"That is enough to satisfy the honour of any gentleman; there is my hand," replied Sayers, with a very stupified air.

And then they shook hands, and laughed as if nothing had happened.

Mary, meanwhile, removed all further

temptations to drinking, and with her little coaxing, winning way, got the Captain out of the house as soon as possible.

Nelly Watson, the only servant of the establishment, had retired for the night, and Mr. Thornton told his daughter to follow her example, whilst he took a few turns up and down the street, as was his habit after he had drank a little freely.

"Don't be long, father," she said, looking out after he was a few paces from the door. "It is past eleven o'clock."

"Go in, child, it is raining," was his only reply, and knowing that her father had a latch key, she obeyed his commands, and went at once to her own little bed room. But she did not go to rest; she remained anxiously listening for his return, till the clock struck twelve. She then opened her window, and looked into the street.

Not a murmur broke the gloomy stillness of

the dark, wet night, either within, or without the house.

To such a young, inexperienced, timid creature, there was something unusually awful in her strange solitude, at such an hour; and terror, and anxiety for her father, such as an older person might not have felt, took possession of her, making her heart beat with an agitation she had no power to control.

At length she heard the sound of steps at the further end of the street. Then to her infinite relief, she distinguished her father's voice. He was answered by a second person in a lower one; but having heard enough to dispel her terrors, she closed the window, and poor girl, actually shed tears of pleasure.

Her father, with all his faults, had ever treated her with tenderness, and totally unconscious of his faults, she clung to him, with the grateful fondness of a motherless girl, who knew no other kindred.

He was father—mother—brother and sister —all in one to her, and she had never been divided from him a whole day, since she could remember anything.

Poor Mary! she had had a strange education! but nature had done much for her, in giving her a loving and gentle heart, and a bright gaiety of humour, which cheerfully met all difficulties in the service of those she loved.

After another half hour had elapsed, she heard two persons enter the house, and then close the door of the parlour. They remained a long time in discourse, but in so low a tone, thas scarcely a murmur reached the ears of the girl, in her little chamber above.

Mary longed to go down to her father, but though Thornton could never resist the temptation of brandy when it came in his way, he was a man of strong intellect and quick temper, and Mary knew well, that in matters of business, he would not brook her intrusion, or interference.

At length she heard the stranger depart, and

when the house door was again closed, her female curiosity impelled her to look out quickly after him, as he went down the street.

It was still very dark, but there was nevertheless a faint dawning of light from the east, which made the gloom less dense, so that she could just distinguish the figure of a man, descending the door steps beneath her window.

He was about the middle size, and of a slender stature, but though muffled in a long cloak, there was a peculiarity in his gait, which struck her forcibly. The figure was only like a shade, that flitted away, and in a second, or two, vanished in the gloom, but its quick shuffling motion was clearly to be distinguished, though the colour and form of its garments were not discernible.

Every man's gait is as much peculiar to himself as his features, and is often as certain an index to his character, as the expression of his countenance.

Mary felt, that she had seen that man before,

although she would have been afraid to assert, that she had recognised him, under such circumstances; for the person whom she supposed to be her father's nocturnal visitor, was one of the wealthiest men in the town. The more she reflected on the events of the night, the more her wonder was excited, and she dreaded that a visit which required so much secrecy, must be of evil import.

Though she slept little she was up in the morning at six o'clock, and busily employed herself with Nelly, to arrange the house, and prepare her father's breakfast.

Thornton appeared half an hour later than usual, and he looked haggard and weary. He was very abstracted, and very silent, and his daughter vainly hoped that he would speak of his noctural visitor. Nevertheless, she did not presume to ask him any questions on the subject. She had an admirable tact and discretion, in discerning what conduct was most agreeable to those with whom she lived, and ever acted

under this influence; for she had no selfishness to interfere with her benignant desire to render others happy.

When her father was gone to his office, she resumed her daily occupations, and strove to think no more of the mysterious events of the night; nor did she consider it right to speak on the subject, to her servant Nelly, yet this woman had lived in the family nearly seven years, was shrewd, honest, and laborious, and being more than ten years older than Miss Thornton, frequently presumed to offer her advice, on subjects where she considered she wanted experience. She had been engaged to be married to a young man who worked in a manufactory, above a year, but that had in no way lessened her attachment to her young mistress, as is too frequently the case; and as she knew much more of her master's affairs than his daughter did, she had for many months felt great anxiety on Miss Thornton's account.

When she came into the parlour that morn-

ing, to take her young lady's orders, before she went to market, she looked at Mary with a peculiar expression, and then asked her if she had slept well the night before.

"Yes, Nelly," she replied. "Why do you make such an unusual inquiry ?"

"Then you heard nothing, I suppose, Miss ?"

"What should I hear."

"Oh, no matter !" answered Nelly; "only it appeared to me, that you put your window up, and certainly some one shut the street door twice. I thought, Miss, you knew that master had a visitor."

"If he had, Nelly, it can be no business of ours," said Miss Thornton, with something like an assumption of authority, by which she thought it necessary occasionally to show that she was Nelly's mistress.

"Certainly not, Miss," returned the honest serving-woman; "but servants have ears and eyes for all that; and I not only know that there was somebody here in the night, but I

believe I could tell you the gentleman's name."

"If I wanted to learn this, my father would inform me, at once," was Mary's quick reply; "but neither you nor I have any right to pry into his secrets; therefore, I beg you will say no more on this subject."

"I have no doubt you are right, Miss Mary," answered the servant, with an affectionate glance at her young mistress.

And then she quietly left the room; but whilst she respected Miss Thornton's discretion, she resolved, nevertheless, to keep a sharp look out for the future. The desire to pry into other people's affairs, especially where there is any apparent wish for concealment, is the commonest failing of undisciplined minds in every class.

When Mary was that day left alone in her father's house, as she frequently was when Mr. Thornton was at his office, and Nelly had business in the town, she had two companions,

who supplied to her the want of other society. The one was her little spaniel Muff, who had been her playfellow when she was a child, and the other, a large, white parrot, which Captain Sayers had brought home on his last voyage, at a time to which her memory did not extend. The bird had become bald from age; but he was as lively and as noisy as he had ever been in his youth. He walked at liberty about the house, sat on his mistress's shoulder at breakfast, fed from her hand, and never failed to meet her at the front door, whenever she returned home. He lived on a perfectly friendly footing with little Muff, and imitated the dog's bark to perfection, when the spaniel was not at home himself, to resent the approach of strangers. These animals were Mary's household friends. She talked to them, she sang to them, as if they understood her; and they did understand her wonderfully, and returned her love tenfold. The parrot drooped

and pined on his perch, in her absence; the spaniel lay spiritless and dull, curled up all day; but at the first sound of her footstep, they were all joy and animation, running and fluttering, barking and screaming, till Nelly declared there was no living in the noise. So wonderful is the instinct of love, which makes even animals sensible of the presence of the true heart which requites their affection.

Though there was an endless succession of routs and balls, and all the various dissipations which the rich call pleasure, going on in the upper town, where the families of all the wealthy traders lived, Mary Thornton's position in society excluded her from all such reunions. Though both her father and mother had been well born, they had fallen in the world, and the daughter of a subordinate and poor custom-house officer, was not admitted into the society of the pretenders to fashion, who had been more fortunate in acquiring wealth, or who un-

derstood how to keep up the appearance of it. Nor had her education fitted her for such scenes.

Though her figure was light as a fairy, and her little feet might have rivalled those of Cinderella, she had never learned to dance. Her father had either never thought of it, or perhaps he had considered it best, not to excite wishes in her mind, which, from her position she was never likely to have the means of gratifying. She had been to a day school, till she was twelve years old, where she had learnt English, and arithmetic, and needle-work; and so when she heard that other young ladies were sent to expensive governesses, where several hundreds a-year were paid for finishing their education, poor Mary Thornton was quite ashamed of her ignorance, though, in good truth, she knew much more than most girls of her own age, who had gone through a costly training. She was an excellent housekeeper she could make and mend every article of he

own, and her father's wearing apparel. Captain Sayers, who had learnt French in a foreign prison, had given her lessons in that language, and she spoke it fluently; and though she had never been taught music, nature had bestowed on her such a sweet voice and perfect ear, that she sang like a little nightingale.

It was a bright morning after the rain of the preceding night, and the air blew softly in at the shaded window of the little parlour, spreading round the scent of the wall-flowers and mignionette, from the green box on the ledge; and the pretty order with which the girl, in true woman's taste, had unconsciously arranged the simple furniture, gave a pleasant charm to the humble room, which is often wanting in the sombre abodes of luxury.

The girl sang as she sat at her work, in a low, sweet, murmuring tone, which like the gushing of hidden waters in the heat of summer, seemed to lull, but cheer the spirit, by the spell of a thousand things unseen, but felt.

She was first disturbed from her pleasant dreams, by a sudden knocking at the house-door.

Mary started up, for she was accustomed to act as porteress during Nelly's absence. The dog barked once or twice, and then, quietly wagging his tail, ran before her to the passage. It was probable she only expected to find some female neighbour, for when she saw a tall, handsome young man, about five-and-twenty, standing on the threshold, her face became as red as crimson, and she shrank back with timidity. But in another moment her eyes sparkled, and she frankly held out her hand to him with undisguised delight.

"Miss Thornton, I presume?" said the gentleman, with joyful animation. "You are so grown, during my absence, that, at first, I scarcely recognised you."

"But I hope, Mr. Edward, you wont find any of us much changed for the worse," said the girl smiling. "We have not forgotten old

friends, so pray come in, my father will be delighted to see you back again."

When she had uttered these words, it suddenly occurred to her mind, that she was alone, but it was too late to retract. Mr. Edward Mallory had already followed her into the parlour. There was no help for it, therefore; so she could only hope that Nelly would soon return, and endeavoured to look as composed as possible. But she could not command her blushes, by whatever feeling they were occasioned. The young man was quite as agitated as she was. He gazed round the little parlour, and then at his young hostess, without uttering a word. A sweet, happy expression came into his large blue eyes, as if he felt a charm in both, but it was the figure of the girl which fixed his attention.

Nothing could be more simple than Mary's close plain dress, and the arrangement of her dark brown hair; but everything about her had an inexpressible taste and neatness. Her

little lace collar, through which her white neck was partially visible, was fastened by a pink riband; her dress encircled her slender waist without a wrinkle, and the little foot which peeped from beneath her dress, had the smartest little boot in the world. Her small hands where as white and delicate, as if no work had ever passed through them, for Mary had a little vanity, in keeping her hands like a lady. But it was the clear bright expression of innocence, and truth, and happy fancy, on which Edward Mallory continued to gaze with evident admiration, even after he addressed her. It was indeed a pleasant face to look upon, for without being regularly beautiful, it had the freshness of youth and a fine complexion, and the eyes varied with every emotion of the heart, whose secrets they seemed destined to betray. The young man never thought of looking at their form or colour; their trusting sweet expression, was too fascinating when they met his own; and he thought them yet

more beautiful, when Mary looked down and blushed, and pretended to resume her work. Above all, she had the irresistible charm of being utterly without self consciousness.

"I am glad to find, Miss Thornton, that my long absence has not entirely obliterated my image from your memory," were the first words he uttered.

"You cannot suppose I could so easily forget an old friend," she replied, casting at him a rapid, timid glance, and then looking down at her work.

Neither spoke again for several minutes.

"I think the parrot knows you, and Muff has never barked since you came in," said Mary, who felt the silence awkward, though as she could not give utterance to her thoughts, she scarcely knew what to say.

"When am I likely to find your father at home?" inquired the young man, as if he had not heard her last words.

"He comes home early to dinner, and will

be here before long," she replied. "We had not heard that you had returned from abroad, so he will, no doubt, be greatly surprised, and delighted, to see you."

"I only arrived last week, in London, where I was sent to transact business for an American house. I received letters there, which induced me to come down hither, by the train, last night. I presume, Miss Thornton, you are aware that I am an outcast from my family? Mine is a cruel position; after an absence of four years, I dare not even approach my paternal home."

"I have heard my father lament the unkindness with which you had been treated by your relatives," replied the girl, forgetting her timidity, in her sympathy with Edward Mallory's misfortunes. "We always hoped that time and absence might have softened their anger, and that on your return all enmity would be forgotten, and you would be again received as a son at Stoke Court."

"Ah, Miss Thornton," rejoined Edward, "some hearts are inexorable, and there appears as little chance now, that I shall ever reenter my father's doors, as on the day I was driven forth to seek my fortunes beyond the Atlantic. My brother's jealousy—though indeed as he is my father's undoubted heir, he has little cause to be jealous of a younger brother—my brother's hate, though I blush to use the word—have not relented."

"It must be very painful to you, to return to this neighbourhood, under such circumstances," said Mary, whilst tears filled her eyes.

"It has both pains and pleasures," replied the young man, who gratified by her artless emotion, gazed at her with undisguised fondness. "I have frequently written to my father, but have received no answer, and I was anxious to learn some tidings of my family, as well as those few friends who still honour an outcast by their regard."

"Indeed, both my father and Captain

Sayers will be delighted to see you," said Mary, blushing deeply. "They were both talking of you, and regretting your absence only yesterday."

"I am delighted to find I am not quite forgotten," returned Edward, in a voice whose slight tremour did not escape little Mary's sensitive ear. "The ties of childhood are very precious to a feeling heart, and mine is not yet all stone, though I have led, for some years, a half savage life, but little in harmony with the gentle training of my youth, whilst my poor mother lived. You must surely remember my mother."

"I was very young when she died," answered Mary, "but I recollect, I used to admire her beauty, as I sat opposite to her at Church, with childish wonder, and often thought the angels must resemble her."

"She was my guardian angel, whilst on earth," said the young man in a low voice,

and he leaned his head upon his hand, to hide his glistening eyes.

"And is so now, no doubt in heaven," returned the girl timidly. "Oh Mr. Edward, it cannot be, that bonds of love like her's are broken eternally by death. Though my mother died so long ago that I scarcely remember her, I believe she keeps watch over me, and lonely and sad would this little chamber be, when I sit day after day in solitude, if I did not feel her spirit ever near, teaching, and guiding, and supporting me. It may be a delusion, but it is a reality to my heart."

Mary Thornton's eyes, as she uttered these words, shone with a wild and beautiful light, so expressive of deep and ardent feeling, that her companion forgot his own anxieties, as he gazed at her with wonder and admiration.

"I am the last person, who would wish to rob you of such a pure source of pleasure," he replied. "But it is surely sad for one so young as you, to be left so much in solitude."

"I never feel it so," she replied in her usual cheerful tone. "I am always occupied, and it cannot be otherwise, for my father must go away to the Custom House."

"But have you no young companions?"

"I never went to school to make any acquaintance, with girls of my own age; nor did my mother wish me to do so, when I was little. I don't desire it myself now, for all the young ladies in this neighbourhood have been brought up differently from me; they are accomplished, and talk a great deal about dressing, and going to parties, and I know nothing about those things, Mr. Edward."

"Do you envy them these pleasures, Miss Thornton?" inquired the young man, looking earnestly into Mary's eyes; but he saw that there was no envy in her innocent heart, and he smiled as she replied.

"Why should I? I have other sources of delight, which they know nothing about; and I really believe, I am happier than they are,

for I have no idle time to be fanciful and discontented. My father is only a poor clerk now, you know, and I have a great deal to do for him. But here he comes," she added, starting up as Mr. Thornton passed the window, and making a hasty apology for leaving her guest, she went herself to open the house door.

CHAPTER III.

When Mary Thornton gave her father admission at the front door, she left him no time to express his surprise at the unusual excitement of her countenance and manner, but telling him, in hurried accents, that Mr. Edward Mallory was waiting in the parlour, to speak with him, she ran up stairs to her own little room, without waiting to listen to his expressions of astonishment and pleasure. She, whose only wish for years had been to behold Edward once more, now, voluntary absented herself from him; for she was fearful of betraying emotions in her father's presence, which she blushed to feel, even when alone.

Mr. Thornton was indeed so greatly surprised

by the presence of such an unexpected guest, that he gave his visitor a most unceremonious, though very hearty welcome.

When he had a little recovered his composure, and could survey Mr. Edward Mallory with tranquillity, he saw that an absence of four years had considerably changed his personal appearance. The tall, slender youth had become an athletic man, whose powerful limbs were yet graceful, and whose features, though bronzed by much exposure to the open air, in various climates, were embellished by the expression of a noble intellect, developed by activity. There was a grave power likewise in his countenance, seldom seen in so young a man, and occassioned by his early necessity for self reliance. But his gravity was rather sad than stern, for though he had grieved deeply, he had never hated. During his years of absence, it had been his constant endeavour to subdue a hastiness of temper, arising from a quick rosentment of every thing mean, false,

or unjust, united with strong affections, which he felt had partly contributed to his disagreements with his family. But, in truth, the heartless unkindness of others had been more in fault than he.

After the first cordial greetings had been exchanged, Mr. Edward Mallory eagerly inquired after his family.

"Though I left my home in anger," he said, "I always remember my father with regret, and the fear of his dying without my having obtained his forgiveness, has often embittered the hours when repose from labour, left me time for thought. I have written to him, but received no answer; yet my letters were very submissive; for I consider that there is no humiliation, even to the proudest man, in seeking to appease a father's anger."

"I well know Sir Thomas Mallory to be a proud, inexorable man," said Thornton. "Since my misfortunes, he considers me quite beneath

his notice, so that I know little, but by common report, of what is going on, at Stoke Court."

"I have already heard some unpleasant reports in London, as to the state of his affairs," returned the young man, eagerly.

"I fear they are not without foundation," answered the Custom House Officer. "Though his fortune was large, his expenditure has always exceeded it. Your eldest brother's extravagance has added to his difficulties. It is well known, that the estates are largely mortgaged; and since the rents have fallen, it is said, they scarcely suffice to pay the interest of the loans. It is also certain, that Sir Thomas, eager for gain, has been induced, by a man who has often accommodated him with money, to join in a great iron speculation, and to gamble madly in railroads."

"Who is this man to whom you allude?"

"Mr. Parkins, the solicitor; he has long

speculated on his own account in many dirty ways, till he is now the richest and most influential man in the place."

"I know him well," said Mallory. "I always disliked him when a boy. People even then wondered at his influence over my father."

"He had lent him money," answered Thornton, "and he had built more than a hundred paltry houses in the old borough to make votes. When your father found he could not be returned without this man's influence, he gave him twenty thousand pounds for these tenements. In less than a year, the Reform Bill was passed, and they were not worth a straw. But Parkins flattered Sir Thomas, led him on by promises of future prosperity, and has him completely in his power."

"Interest unites strange partners," replied Edward.

"We see it every day," said the old man; "but the difference of the characters and

talents of these two men, gives Mr. Parkins as much advantage over Sir Thomas, as his money. He is a profound intriguer. He has crept on by slow degrees, till he can turn the town council round his finger; and yet no man quite understands him. He listens to all opinions before he gives his own; and yet, somehow, he makes every one, at last, do as he pleases. Your father has no chance against him. He is a very proud man; but, you will excuse me, Mr. Edward, when I say that he is not a man of business."

"He never was," was the reply.

"And never will be," continued Thornton; "he has too much self-esteem—he is too violent and impatient—and he has been too much accustomed to have things all his own way, as all such great men have. In fact, you must know that he is not a clever man."

"And you think that Mr. Parkins is perfectly well acquainted with all my father's affairs?" demanded Mallory.

To this question, Thornton did not immediately reply; and when Edward looked up, he was astonished at the restless, uneasy expression of his countenance. There was a slight tremor in the old man's voice, when, after a pause, he said, that he thought it most probable that the Baronet placed perfect confidence in his solicitor, in all matters of business.

"Of course, I only speak of business," returned Edward, with some surprise. "Do you happen to know, Mr. Thornton, how my brother and this man get on together?"

"If I must tell you the truth, your brother treats him with great insolence."

"And does he submit to be thus treated?"

"He is said to support it with unaccountable indifference; and as it cannot be supposed that he is insensible to it, men who know him best conjecture that he waits his time to resent it."

"You have drawn an extraordinary portrait

of this Mr. Parkins," said Mallory, arising, and pacing the room in agitated thought.

"He is an extraordinary man," answered th Custom House Officer, "and I believe he holds your father's destiny in his hands. So I put you on your guard; but, for Heaven's sake, don't compromise me. I have spoken too openly, perhaps: but I have known you from a boy, and I feel for you, as if you were my own son. You have been shamefully used."

"Do you suppose that Parkins has been my enemy?"

"It is impossible to say; but if he has any interest to serve, by keeping you from your father, he will do so."

"I must leave England again in less than a month," replied Edward, "and I shall try every means in my power to obtain my father's forgiveness, before I return to pass the remainder of my life in America."

"To judge by your appearance, Mr. Ed-

ward," returned Thornton, "you have fared better on the other side of the Atlantic, than if you had remained at home."

"In some ways, I have!" was the young man's reply, "nor do I regret anything, but the painful circumstances which led to my departure. The studies of a college life did not suit my active temperament. My mind is, by nature, prone to be more occupied with the future than the past. When I heard the hum of science, and the rushing activity of the actual world, which penetrated even my dull college walls, my spirit became restless, and ardently longed to join in the great battle of mind, which is changing the whole constitution of society. I could no longer contentedly pore over the particles or the prosody of a dead language, nor concentrate my energies to dissect the literature of a dead nation, or the contradictory doctrines of rival churches. My sympathies were all with the living, active world. I had dreams, too—"

"Aye, so have all young men," said Thornton, shaking his head. "I have had them, all my life. But they are the most dangerous deluders of youth."

"Perhaps so," answered Edward.

"I am sure of it," retorted Thornton. "They led me into speculations; and speculations—I believe you know, have made me a beggar."

"My dreams took another direction," said the young man, simply. "I dreamt of universal freedom, and universal knowledge, and—"

"A world of your own making," interrupted Thornton, laughing. "The only difference between us was, you speculated in politics and morality, and I speculated in money. We both intended to have everything our own way, like all speculators; and, as is generally the case, we have found out that we cannot."

"In some measure, I admit that I have felt

the truth of what you say," said Mallory. "You probably know, that feeling that the whole bent of my mind, my love of new knowledge, new ideas, and new adventures, equally unfitted me for the life of a country curate, to which I had been destined by my father from my birth, I refused to enter the church, and thereby incurred his unrelenting displeasure. I confess that I replied with too fiery a spirit to his reproaches. I resented the insulting sarcasms of my eldest brother; and though my father did not curse me, he commanded me to quit his presence, and his house for ever."

"I never before knew exactly the cause of your going abroad," replied the old man; "but I heard that you had been turned out on the world without a half-penny, and that Sir Thomas had threatened to disinherit you."

"Fortunately, I had five hundred pounds, which had been left me by an uncle," said Mallory. "With this money I have travelled,

and seen much; and, gradually, as I learnt by experience to know the real world, I was convinced, that the acquirement of knowledge, with industry, and moral activity, were the only sure means of improving the individual, and with him, elevating the social virtues and well-being of society. I found all the liberty which men can desire in America. There are scarcely any political evils to combat—there are no classes in existence, for whose advantage the interests of millions are set aside, or who can prescribe opinions for other men. The means of activity and progress, physical and mental, are open to all men, and industry is sure of obtaining its just reward. There is space enough for every man, who chooses to work; and in work, I have always found my greatest happiness. My small capital enabled me to be one of the founders of a village, which will soon be a capital, in the far west. With the increase of the place, I have become a man of responsibility. My education, and

my knowledge, give me an influence amongst my companions, which nothing else could bestow."

"Your talent, you mean," returned Thornton.

"As you please," answered Mallory, laughing; "but my success has convinced me, that even where equal rights prevail, no such thing as moral equality can ever exist. My superiority has been voluntarily acknowledged by my companions, and I feel ennobled by my efforts to fulfil to the utmost the duties thus imposed upon me. By contributing to the moral welfare and social happiness of a small community, I may, perhaps, be the ultimate cause of good to thousands of human beings, yet unborn."

"You are happy, therefore, Mr. Edward; you deserve to be happy!" exclaimed the Custom-house Officer. "Ah, if, when I was young, I had followed such a course, I should have been a better man than I am now. But

I had not your strength of mind. I was a slave to appearances. I spent money to appear rich, because I thought I must have all, which others, of a higher class, esteem necessary. I longed to be rich, because I saw that riches gave even vulgar fools consideration, and in trying to be rich too fast, I lost everything."

"It is the way with a great many people in this country," said Edward. "The love of luxury, and the love of money, will, before long, degrade the character of the nation; unless, by education, and the efforts of the press, a higher aim can be substituted for human activity. Religion, though ostensibly pervading all society, has hitherto failed to improve the morals of the country."

"Because it is more apparent than real," answered Thornton. "Men forget their religion in the pursuit of money, however punctually they may go to church; and when their hopes of gain are disappointed, they are broken down in spirit, as I am. They cannot take

up a new aim in life. Their hopes exhausted, like those of a ruined gambler, discontented with themselves, and careless of opinion, they seek consolation for their disappointments—I am ashamed to confess it, Mr. Edward—they seek forgetfulness—in brandy-and-water."

"Surely, Mr. Thornton, you will never have the weakness to yield to such temptation," returned the young man.

"I try to forget my own follies in thinking of the glorious times we live in," answered the officer, who already repented the confession which had escaped him. "I have seen mighty progress since my youth, and I feel proud of my country—not only for her wealth, her industry, and her order, but for the steadiness with which she is gradually emancipating herself from old abuses, and superannuated laws—the quietness with which she is, every year, acquiring greater freedom, and, in spite of all the efforts of her subtle enemies, spreads her guardian wings above the oppressed in every

nation of the earth. I, for one, never cry out against the times we live in. They are wonderful times—stirring times—when every year seems to make as much progress as former centuries."

"That is one side of the picture, Mr. Thornton," said Mallory, earnestly, "and you call it civilisation. But though the tyranny of despots may be shaken off, the tyranny of money, and the tyranny of vice, are every day encreasing; these, debasing man by degrees, imperceptible to himself, may subject him, when least expected, to be again subjugated by the tyranny of force. No nation can long remain prosperous and independent, when unsustained by moral strength. Without that, even liberty becomes a snare."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Edward," was the old man's reply, for he could talk excellent morality, though he often lacked the strength to put it in practice. "All thinking men throughout the country are of your

opinion, and are doing every thing in their power to educate the people."

"The people must be taught to educate themselves, to strive to elevate themselves, and to win respect for themselves. Nobody else can—or will do it for them, in the right way. They are beginning to understand, that it is only their want of knowledge and discretion which compels them to be governed by a minority."

"Very true," answered Thornton. "But the people must be very different from our poor, hard-worked, half-starved peasantry, or the corrupt rabble of large towns, before they can shake the aristocracy of rank and wealth, which is supreme in this country."

"Improvement is not revolution," answered Mallory, with a smile. "Time and natural causes wear down the mountains, as surely, though less rapidly than earth's convulsions. But I fear I am detaining you; your time is short, I know."

"Will you spend the evening with me?" said the Custom-house Officer. "Remember, whilst you stay, I shall always be most happy to see you after six o'clock."

Mallory accepted this invitation with thanks, and he was delighted at the opportunity thus afforded him of reviving his early intimacy with Thornton's pretty daughter; and the old gentleman was in high spirits at the prospect of receiving him as a guest that evening.

Thornton was fond of news and excitement, and delighted to interest himself in Edward Mallory's affairs, which seemed to connect him with the society in which he had moved in his better days. He was very fond of talking, and he talked well; he was not deficient in abilities, and he had a good deal of that general information which quick men pick up from desultory reading, and in the course of business; but his principles were not strict, and slothful, and easily influenced, his conduct had never been equal to his conversation. Whenever he

had acted for himself, he had been what the world calls unfortunate—that is to say, he had wanted energy and decision to put his ideas in execution, and the strong will necessary to insure success. To this was added, an utter carelessness with regard to money, more especially after his own capital was exhausted, and his extravagance was supported by credit.

When this ended in insolvency, and a place in the Custom-house, he had yielded without resistance to the habit of drinking—not to intoxication, but sufficiently to drown care, and daily to increase the natural sluggishness of his mind and body. The duties of his office, by their regularity and daily recurrence, had probably prevented him falling into worse excesses.

Edward Mallory was perfectly aware of Thornton's weakness; but the affection he had long cherished for Mary Thornton, made him inclined to think better of her father's principles than he deserved. He had been kind to

him when a boy, and he relied on his good-nature without reflecting that there is an easy facility of temper which leads as frequently to vice as to virtue.

Thornton was neither envious, nor malicious; but he had not had sufficient principle to keep out of debt, or, at any time of his life, to live within his income. He was a gentleman, and so people had found excuses for him; but the simple truth was, that he had made a fraudulent abuse of his credit, and would gladly have renewed the same course, if he could have found people to trust him. As it was, his affairs, at the time of Edward Mallory's return, were in a very embarrassed state.

CHAPTER IV.

When Edward Mallory left the humble residence of the Custom-house Officer, he directed his steps towards a poor and thickly populated part of the town, which lay far distant from the abodes of wealth and fashion, on the southern cliff.

As he descended the high street towards the port, the whole appearance of the place and people gradually changed. At first, he saw, with admiration, the large windowed shops displaying, behind enormous plates of precious glass, every luxury which the art and industry of man is capable of producing. He beheld the gorgeous silks of native and foreign looms,

such as, in former times, none but the wives of rich nobility could ever have hoped to wear; near these were painted carpets and rich hangings, worthy to adorn the harem of an eastern Sultana; silver embossed in classic patterns, destined, perhaps, for some half savage potentate; furs, and jewels, and porcelain, and rich furniture, of ancient and of modern fashion.

He observed, with disgust, the fawning tradesmen, the servile sycophants of wealth, conducting their rich customers to the well-appointed carriages awaiting them before the shop doors, whilst some poor tattered wretch begged vainly for a half-penny as they passed.

He marked the young children of the wealthy decked out in velvets and satins, in fantastic fashion, led carefully along by well-dressed nurses, whilst little knots of the infant poor, unshod, uncovered, and scantily clothed by their filthy rags, were playing amongst the dust and ashes of the street, with that care-

less joyfulness—of which, happily for childhood, only disease or pain can rob it.

But all these evidences of wealth gradually disappeared, as he advanced into the lower town. The shops were smaller, and the character of their contents diminished in beauty, and in worth. Articles were ticketted at low prices in the windows, and the most ordinary commodities for the use of the poor, were alone exposed to view. The meat looked dusty—the butter rancid—and the bundles of radishes and cabbages on the stalls were withered and discoloured.

The passengers in the street, also, partook of this change. They were chiefly sailors and artizans, or their wives and families; some in working garments, and others in holyday attire, for there was that afternoon a fair in the old town; a miserable vestige of those ancient assemblies for festivity and traffic, which ministered to the wants and pleasures of our ancestors.

Here a pitman was carrying his youngest child in his arms, and his wife, dragging on two others with hands full of gingerbread, followed; next to this family group, came half-a-dozen young sailors, full of health and mirth, singing and exchanging jests with the passers-by. Close behind them, crawled a half-starved old woman, whose eyes were bleared, and her skin shrivelled by the constant use of opium, so intent on the rags and rubbish, she ever and anon picked from the dusty pavement, as to be deaf to all that was passing near her. Her days of pleasure were long past; she had almost forgotten them.

As Mallory looked at this squalid, miserable bundle of dirty rags, he wondered for what purpose she could be left on earth, whilst the young, and the beautiful, and the happy, are so often snatched away, in the midst of their prosperity, and their love. But if she had no other use, she softened his heart to pity, and he slipped a shilling into her hand, as he

passed her. Unused to such charity, she looked up at him with amazement; and when she beheld the expression of compassion on his fine, handsome, youthful face, she muttered something which he did not stop to hear.

Edward felt deeply interested in the scene which was passing around him. He viewed the shows, he lingered to witness the performance of a conjurer, and he entered a booth where there was an exhibition of wonderful canary birds, who fought duels, drove coaches, and attracted a large audience to witness their performances. But he was not seeking amusement; he was anxious to study the people in their own haunts; and to learn to understand their tastes, and their feelings, when released, for a brief space, from the pressure of toil and necessity.

After he had satisfied his curiosity, he turned from the crowded market-place, into a narrow, dark street, inhabited by the poorest class of labourers in that busy port. He knew

the place well; for though he had not taken orders, during the years when he had believed that it would be his destiny to do so, he had been indefatigable in visiting the habitations of the poor, and ministering, as far as lay in his power, to their spiritual wants, whilst he strove to alleviate their physical necessities. Often had he mounted the stairs of the wretched lodging-houses, where fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, the destitute, and the vile, were huddled together into the same narrow den, to share the same food, to sleep on the same bed, to endure the same deprivations, untaught, uncared for; the old to perish in their hardened misery, and the young to grow up in forgetfulness, or ignorance, of the common decencies of life, which even the savage makes an effort to observe. Though he had formerly been a witness there, to scenes of vice and depravity, such as the tongue shrinks from relating, and the pen from describing, he had felt the deep-

est compassion for the sinners, whose wretched lot in life, in many instances, seemed to condemn them to crime, and he had done all which gentleness and charity could effect, to purify and to save.

But that day he entered none of these abodes. He passed rapidly on, and leaving this street behind him, he ascended the hill, where, though the houses were still poor, they wore a less revolting appearance, and being smaller, were generally inhabited only by one family. This, to the decent labourer, and especially to his wife and family, is a great comfort and advantage.

Yet even here, in a part of the town only recently erected, no attempt had been made to remove, by drainage, any kind of impurity. Nevertheless, the air was fresher than in the streets below; for the elevation was so great, that the sea breezes blew freely along the narrow avenue. Every year such streets arose, and were peopled as soon as built, for the sur-

plus population of the country every day streamed into the town, to endeavour to earn there, a precarious existence, as the poor slaves of the splendid community, whose palaces arose along the margin of the sea. As there was not sufficient work to give employment to these new comers, discontent and the poor rates became greater in exact proportion with the increase of population, and the families possessed of property, who had fled thither, from country towns, to escape the tax, found that the evil was aggravated by their change of abode.

The only building which Mallory saw arising above the general low level of misery around him, like a mound in the desert, which has become great by the accumulation of the dust, even of that wretched soil, was a huge dissenting chapel.

Although it was not Sabbath day, there was evidently some extraordinary celebration going on within it, for hundreds of well-dressed per-

sons of the middle and lower ranks were streaming towards its doors. Curious to ascertain the cause of this unusual agitation, the gentleman stopped, and asked a decent looking woman for information.

"It is what is called a revival, sir," she replied. "There is a wonderful preacher come over from America, and he is going round the country, calling sinners to repentance. He is to preach this afternoon, and any poor creature can go in just now, and seek private comfort from him in the vestry."

"And has he made many converts?" demanded Mallory.

"Yes, sir, the people are talking of several," answered the woman. "Sinners are often frightened for a time, by the preachers, but it never lasts above a few days, and then they are sure to fall back again into their old ways."

"But you are going to the chapel, yourself, are you not?" inquired Mallory.

"Yes, sir! I love to hear a stirring sermon, and fine language that rouses the dullest heart, like the sound of a trumpet. It is very different from a church, where the sermons put people to sleep. Ladies and gentlemen may understand and like them, but poor people don't. They like chapel preachers better, because they are in earnest, and try all they can to bring sinners to Heaven. Oh, sir, they are the only comforters of the poor."

Edward thanked the woman, and musing on what she had told him, he turned to pursue his way. As he did so, his eyes fell on a figure, which at once arrested his attention. It was that of a man, probably about forty years of age, though his tall and meager figure was bent from labour or debility; his nose was aquiline, his face thin and care-worn, so that the cheek-bones seemed on the point of protruding through the dark, dry skin. His complexion was peculiarly pallid and haggard, and Edward, as he examined him, thought he

saw traces of rouge on some parts of his face. He was not in the garb of a mechanic, but wore cloth trowsers of shabby gentility, and bye-gone fashion; a thread-bare dress coat, whose sleeves were too short for him, and a very rusty black silk handkerchief, spread out before, as if to conceal the want of a shirt, gave indisputable evidence of his poverty.

Yet still, the longer Mallory looked at him, the more he felt certain that he had once known him in the dress and position of a gentleman, and a very merry gentleman too; dashing, careless, and exulting in all the pride of ardent and joyous youth.

The man went on with the stream towards the chapel, without observing him; apparently without observing anything, or anybody around him; looking on the ground with a melancholy and abstracted air, indifferent to all save his own thoughts. Still Mallory could not feel certain as to his identity, and when he

entered the place of worship, he decided to follow him.

He did so unobserved, and seated himself on one of the benches near the middle of the large vaulted building, in such a position as to be able to observe the man he followed. There was no preacher at that time, in the pulpit, but many persons, especially old men and women, were seated in all parts of the benches, and others went in and out at a vestry door not far from the spot where Edward sat. More than once, he heard whispered questions asked by demure gentlemen in white neckcloths, when females issued forth from this small chamber, as to the comfort their consciences had received. He did not doubt that the great American, was within, speaking words of consolation to those who were weak of heart.

He had seen a good deal of these gentlemen on the other side of the Atlantic. Political freedom does not emancipate mankind, from folly and superstition.

Low wails and groanings gradually arose on every side, as the people around became more and more earnest in prayer, and the man whom Mallory had followed thither, joined with such wild fervour in these strange devotions, that had Edward not caught a view of his upturned countenance, he would speedily have left the chapel, convinced that he was unknown to him; but there was something so peculiar in his large restless eyes, that once distinctly seen, his doubts were in a great measure dispelled. Nor, on reflection, was he surprised to find his once jovial and reckless acquaintance in such a place, for a man who has brought ruin and despair on himself, by the pursuit of pleasure, is more likely, when his purse and his spirits are exhausted, to seek consolation in the wild excitement of fanaticism, than in the promises of sober and pure religion.

At length the sermon commenced, and such was the vehemence and virulence of the preacher, that sobs were soon heard from all

parts of the building, and one girl went into most violent hysterics. An old woman in a shawl and black bonnet, with a face like midnight, and a voice like an east wind, groaned most awfully, as she knelt in an apparent agony of remorse and devotion. Yet she contrived, nevertheless, to perceive that a handsome young gentleman was on the same bench with her, and she inquired in a low voice, what he came there to seek.

"Faith," replied Edward, with happy presence of mind.

"Pray then, my dear, pray," she returned, and then groaned deeply. An old sailor solemnly echoed the mournful sound, and as if it possessed some magnetic power, it was repeated from various parts of the chapel, till it became a perfect howl.

But we have no wish further to unveil the mysteries of such a scene. We can only lament, as Edward Mallory did, when he left the building, that the holy aspirations of the people,

who amidst ignorance, and vice, and degradation, ever turn as by an instinct of their nature, to search for the divine light from whence they have gone astray, are thus left to run to waste; and that by the neglect, or prejudices of their superiors, whose duty it is to train their humbler fellow creatures, to distinguish between good and evil, they are left in ignorance to become the deluded victims of the first needy speculator in fanaticism.

Lost in these reflections, Mallory, had, for a few moments, forgotten the object of his pursuit, when a hand was laid on his arm, and the man he had before observed, himself, inquired if he had forgotten Mat Fuller?

"Then I am not mistaken!" Edward hastily replied, and he shook the thin, brown, ungloved hand of the stranger, as cordially as if it had been that of a peer.

"Thank you," said Mathew, and he laughed, though his large eyes glistened with a bright

dew. "I shall not forget that Edward Mallory, the son of a baronet, shook a poor thread-bare vagabond by the hand, in the face of this very honourable congregation. You are always the same kind-hearted fellow, it appears, unspoilt by the world, eh? You, who were educated at Oxford, and had prospects of church preferment, what took you to such a place?"

"May I not retort the question," returned Mallory smiling.

"Nay, nay, don't ask a poor desolate sinner like myself, why he plunges into the deepest water he can find, to wash out the stains upon his conscience," rejoined Fuller. "First of all I detest going to church, because I am one of the mob, now. You cannot deny that, when I tell you this is my best attire. It is but thread-bare as you see, and so I must sit amongst the beggars, if I went, and I lack the humility. Then, sir, the church service is too tame for me. I want excitement—I have always had excitement, and I cannot do without it,

though it has been my ruin. When I have heard such a fellow as that American, I feel comforted for a day or two."

"I am surprised to hear it," said Edward, in a very quiet voice.

"No doubt you are, for your conscience is clear," said Mathew, bitterly. "But when the excitement subsides, I relapse into old habits, I confess; and shaking off remorse, I try to be careless and gay, and to forget both the past and the future, as I did when I was young. But I seldom succeed now, Mr. Edward, and sometimes a terrible anxiety gets complete possession of me. In one of those moments, I wrote to you. You got my letter?"

"Yes, it was sent to me in London, and it brought me hither, sooner than I intended. I have been in search of you all day."

"Well, well, that is very kind of you," answered the man. "It is pleasant to think that there is one man upon earth, who is not too proud to acknowledge an old acquaintance,

in misfortune. I was afraid you might have become so aristocratic, or fashionable since we last met, that your respect for morals and appearances might make you think it necessary to cut me."

"I love all connected with my youth," answered the gentleman kindly.

"Yet there are some who were so, who are not worthy of your attachment," said Fuller, with a sigh. "I have a great deal to tell you, Mr. Edward. But there is the clock striking five. I have an engagement till eight o'clock, and cannot now stay with you a moment longer."

"Where shall I find you again?" demanded Mallory.

Fuller laughed, so as to show the whole range of his beautiful small white teeth, which were still faultless, but it was a bitter laugh. Quickly—nervously—he put his thin lips close to Edward's ear, and whispered a few words, and then drew back, and gazed eagerly at him,

with fear it might be, to see the effect his communication had produced. To his infinite relief, the gentleman betrayed neither astonishment nor disgust.

"You gain your living in that way, do you?" was his quiet reply.

"Yes," answered the stranger. "I cannot starve, and I endeavour to keep out of the workhouse, as long as I can. If you will be near the place about eight o'clock, I shall then be at liberty, and will look out for you."

"You may depend on my being there," replied Mallory.

"I thank you from my heart," said Fuller. "I would ask you to my lodging, Mr. Edward, but though highly elevated, it is somewhat too humble for such an honoured guest. So God speed you, sir, and your obedient servant likewise, for I have not a moment to lose."

So saying the stranger darted away at a rapid pace towards the lower town, and Mallory returned to Mr. Thornton's to excuse himself

from spending the evening there, as he had promised to do. It was a disappointment to him to renounce the pleasure he had anticipated in Mary's company, but there were circumstances connected with Mathew Fuller, which made it of most paramount importance for him to have a private conference with his old acquaintance.

CHAPTER V.

MALLORY had proceeded about half way down the street, after he had parted with Fuller, when he stopped at the door of a small cottage. It was a poor place, but the clean window had a neat little white curtain, and two geraniums blossomed behind it, a sure evidence that the inhabitant was of the better class.

There was a low murmuring within, as of some one reading, which prevented the summons being heard, so the young man lifted the latch without further ceremony.

A neat old woman, who sat in a wooden chair by the fire, attempted to rise as he entered, and a very old man, in a much patched

coat, laid down a book he had been reading, and saluted him with some surprise.

"Can it be possible, Margaret, you do not know your foster son, Edward Mallory?" said the gentleman, at once holding out his hands to the old woman, and making her resume her seat.

"Well, Master Edward, I am astonished!" she exclaimed. "Who would have thought of seeing you. This is a wretchedly poor place for a gentleman like you to come to."

Edward looked around him; it was indeed a poor place; yet it was clean, and the flowers in the window, and a few bright kitchen utensils on a dresser, sufficed to prove, that the occupant had once seen better days. But Mrs. West was now past work, and she was very grateful, that her savings, whilst in service, sufficed to procure her such a home, and spared her the mortification in old age, of going into the union-workhouse.

"Don't let me disturb you," said Edward,

kindly, when he perceived that the old man was about to depart.

"Well, Sir, if you will excuse him," returned Margaret, with a courtesy which might have well become one of higher rank; "he is a very kind neighbour, sir. Mark Bernard comes to read to me, sir; a great blessing. Without that, I should have many dreadful, lonely hours to pass, for I cannot read myself. Few were taught to read when I was young, and oh, sir, such as you can never know what a curse it is, to be shut out from the blessed words of scripture, when age and poverty have need of its consolation. Mark reads like a clergyman."

"No—no—Margaret, not that," said the old man, looking up brightly, through his large spectacles, well pleased to hear himself praised. "The gentleman knows well enough how such as I can read. Badly indeed, though better than not at all. Margaret and I have known each other this fifty years," he said, turning

towards Mallory. "We were as young, and fresh, as you, when we were first acquainted. Old friendship is a great tie, sir, and so I am glad, that I can do anything for her now she is old and lonely."

"And you read to her every day?" demanded Edward, who was deeply touched by this simple picture of humble attachment, and wondered in his heart, if any human being he then knew, would do him such faithful service, after the lapse of half a century.

"Yes, sir, I have read to her, every day for three years past," answered Mark; "and it is a comfort to us both, for whilst it is a pleasure to us in this world, we hope it prepares us for the next, where we must expect to go before long."

"I like better to hear him, than one of the Scripture readers, who came to me the other day," said Mrs. West; "for you see, sir, we both feel alike, Mark does it for loving kindness, but the person who is sent by the society,

only does it for hire. It is very different. If the poor could read themselves, we should have no want of those kind of people; and we don't like them coming about our houses, dictating and advising more than the clergy, who are gentlemen, would ever presume to do."

"Yet, no doubt those who send them, mean well towards the poor," returned Mallory.

"Very likely, sir," said Mark Bernard; "I believe many of the rich mean very kindly towards us, sir, and yet, in spite of their Church, vice and wickedness are increasing every day. They talk to us of the next world —that is all very well for the old, but the young want hopes in this world, to keep them in the right path. Labour—labour—labour—for scanty bread, every day of a long life, and a death-bed in a union workhouse, without a loving hand to close your eyes! how can such a prospect as that make men try to keep honest? it breaks down heart, and spirit, and conscience, and the more we multiply, the worse it gets.

What is to become, in another ten years, of all the young vagabonds swarming about the streets of this place, without either work, or schooling, I cannot guess, sir."

"They must be removed to a country, where there is more room for them," answered the gentleman.

"That is what I say," cried old Margaret, "but yet, Mr. Edward, I am right glad that you have come back from foreign parts, and I hope you never mean to leave old England again."

"That must depend on circumstances," said Mallory.

"Have you seen your father, sir?"

"No, I have not ventured to Stoke Court."

"And have yeu never heard from any of the family?"

"Not a word. It is on that account that I have come here to-day. I want to know, if you can tell me anything of the state of affairs, at the great house."

"Oh, master Edward, I can give you little good news," answered the old woman with evident hesitation.

Mark Bernard understood, that his presence prevented her speaking openly, and he arose therefore, and saying that he would return again in the evening, he left the cottage.

As soon as he was gone, the whole manner of Edward Mallory suddenly changed. The most impassioned animation of countenance, instantly replaced his former assumed tranquillity, and arising from his chair, he stood in front of the old woman, with his eager eyes fixed inquiringly on her face.

"Margaret," he said, "you must tell me all! there is no one, on whose truth I can place such firm reliance."

"I am afraid, I can give you little comfort, my dear young master," she replied. "Mr. Oswald is as proud, and headstrong as ever, and yet, your father's blind indulgence, seems daily to increase."

"I have heard that," answered the young man, in quick and abrupt accents; "but tell me, I entreat you, is he married, or is there any prospect of his being so?"

"To Miss Thornton, do you mean?" inquired Mrs. West, with a searching glance. "Oh, Mr. Edward, are you still faithful to your boyish love?"

"Don't question me, Margaret, but answer me at once," the young man eagerly returned. "Is my brother engaged to her?"

"He courts her, and has courted her long," was the reply; "but she avoids him, as the dove does the hawk. If her innocent heart hates anything upon earth, it is that man. She persuaded her father some time ago to forbid him coming to their house."

"Has another gained her affection?"

"Ah, she is a pretty and a good creature. I don't wonder you are jealous, Master Edward! but you have no cause," said Margaret, smiling. "I believe she loves you better than any one

else upon earth. She often comes here and talks with me for an hour, about the time when you were children together. Your absence seemed every month to grieve her more and more. When you see her, Mr. Edward, you will not long have any doubts about her love."

"I have seen her!" answered the young man, with a deep sigh.

"And you found her prettier than ever, I am sure, sir," said Mrs. West.

"She received me kindly—but almost like a stranger," replied Edward, in an agitated voice. "Though much handsomer than when I left her, she is so changed, she seemed no longer the little Mary Thornton, whose image has been my constant companion during my long years of absence."

"Did you think her changed for the worse, sir?" enquired the nurse, archly.

"Oh, no, certainly not," was the reply. "She has become prettier than I ever supposed

she could be; and if my brother was my rival when we were boys, he must adore her now."

"He has pursued her, as I have told you, with unchanging eagerness," said the old woman, "till Mr. Thornton complained to your father of his intrusive visits, and told him that Miss Thornton had positively rejected him. The Baronet was very angry, and accused the Custom-house Officer of trying to entrap his son into a low marriage, and high words ensued. Miss Mary told me this herself."

"And did Oswald quietly submit to give her up?" enquired Mallory.

"He appeared to submit," returned Mrs. West; "but, from all I hear, he is still madly in love with her. He certainly waylays her in her walks, and takes every opportunity of renewing his addresses; but his perseverance is all useless. She hates him, as I have told you, and I am heartily glad you have come back, sir, to look after your own interest. Oh, Mr. Edward, I trust you have been doing well,

wherever you have been, for I fear you have little inheritance to expect from your father."

"I hear that his affairs are in great confusion," said Mallory, in a low voice.

"Every estate is mortgaged," returned Mrs. West, "and Sir Thomas has got into all kinds of affairs he does not understand, besides gambling more and more, every year, in those dreadful railways. The people say, Mr. Parkins, the attorney, has drawn him on to ruin. Mr. Oswald keeps race horses and hunters, and there is no end to his extravagance."

"All this will probably make little difference to me," said Edward, mournfully. "My father has sworn to cut me off with a shilling; and though I would gladly obtain his forgiveness, I covet none of his property. I have put away the pride of my family, Margaret, which often makes a younger son a dependent all his life, and I have entered into trade, by which I hope to be able to earn an honest livelihood for myself."

"I am glad to hear it, sir," said Mrs. West, "for you have been cruelly used ever since you were born. It broke your poor mother's heart to see such distinction made between her two children, and all because the eldest son was to have the title, and be a great man."

"It made me very unhappy once," answered Mallory, "but I begin to feel that I have reason to be grateful, that I was driven, by unkindness, to make my own fortune. I am far happier than my brother is, since I have had to depend on my own exertions for my daily bread, and I have learnt, Margaret, that a man's nature is only half developed, till, by his own exertions, he becomes an independent and useful member of society."

"God bless you, my dear young master; I am glad you are happy, for you deserve to be so," said the nurse. "Your mother, in her deepest sorrow, often said, it consoled her to think, that with a heart and head like yours,

you would not fail to prosper, in spite of all injustice."

"My poor mother," murmured the young man, as if scarcely conscious of what he said, "she loved me truly. After her death, no one cared what was my destiny."

"Oh, Master Edward, you would not say that if you knew how often Miss Thornton and I have talked of you," returned the old woman, reproachfully.

"I am glad to find that I was not quite forgotten—and so Miss Thornton comes often to see you?"

"Once a week, regularly," was the reply. "This is a poor place, sir; but it would have been poorer still without her charity, and that of one other generous friend."

"And has my father not sufficiently provided for your wants, after your long service?" enquired Mallory, with surprise.

"I receive nothing from your father, sir," said Margaret, quietly.

The young man passed his hand over his brow to conceal his features; but he made no observation.

"And who is your other friend?" he enquired, after a pause.

"A gentleman, who is kind to me, as he is to hundreds," said Mrs. West. "Where there are so many in need of help, no riches would suffice to give sufficient to all; but he gives largely to the poor; and we all know, that he has our good so much at heart, that a word, and a smile from him, has cheered many a sad and drooping heart, more than the money he bestowed. You must remember him, sir, though he was never your father's friend."

"Of whom are you speaking?" demanded Edward.

"Of Mr. Gerard."

"What, the wealthy merchant? does he extend relief to a servant of my father?" exclaimed the young man, with astonishment. "His purse is ever open to the poor! there is

no end of what he does for the people. Every improvement that has been made in the town, for their advantage, is the work of Mr. Gerard. He is a grand man, Mr. Edward, though those who are jealous of him, refuse to associate with a merchant, and say he was not born a gentleman. But he does not want them, he has too large a heart, to care only for fine people ?"

"I understood, before I left England, that he had advanced large sums to my father, on mortgage !"

"Very likely, sir; but everybody knows he has given nobly to build schools and reading-rooms, and to found other useful charities; and Mark Bernard tells me, that he wishes every labouring man to be taught to understand his true interest. Mark ought to know him well, sir, for his son Frank is a porter in his warehouse. He wishes all his workmen to have some better way of spending their leisure

hours, than in a public-house. We all think he must be a good Christian, sir, for he does to his neighbours as he would be done by."

"And he is unmarried, is he not?" enquired Mallory.

"Yes, sir; and he is now near sixty years of age. It was said that he was in love with your aunt Edith, when you were an infant; and that your father would not allow her to marry him; and so, in despair, she ran off with an officer, a Mr. Blake, who was in the navy with Sir Thomas Mallory, before he came to the title. This Mr. Blake was brought to a court martial, soon after they married, and dismissed the service, for some breach of discipline; and this too I have heard, was your father's doing, who never forgave him marrying his sister."

"And my aunt died soon after, did she not?" asked Mallory.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Blake took his disgrace so

much to heart, that he never returned home, but went to sea in a trading vessel, and sailed no one knew whither. Your aunt, lonely and deserted, continued to reside at the port where he had left her, long hoping for his return. But he never came back; and if he wrote, his letters never reached her. At the end of six months, your father announced her decease, and all the family went into mourning. I can tell you no particulars of her death; for, of course, we servants had no means of knowing more than Sir Thomas thought proper to tell us."

"Did she leave any family?"

"I never heard that she had a child," said Mrs. West. "She had only been married a year and a half. She was a beautiful young lady, Mr. Edward, but foolish and self-willed, and spoilt by flattery, as many are. I have heard, that she and Mr. Blake were not happy together, which, perhaps, was one reason for his leaving her; but she never loved him, as

she did Mr. Gerard. The pride of great gentlemen, like Sir Thomas Mallory, is the cause of many heartless and miserable marriages."

"And a heartless marriage is the source of endless misery," replied Mallory; "no pride can compensate to the vacant heart for the want of love—no gold or splendour can purchase happiness, in married life, where there is union, but no concord."

"It must be a fearful trial," rejoined Mrs. West.

"Well, Margaret, if I follow your advice, and marry Miss Thornton," said Mallory, laughing; "such will never be my wretched lot! And when a man makes a mistake, as Blake did, in his choice of a wife, perhaps, the best thing for both is, for him to do, as he did, and run away. But I have always heard a very bad character of that man. It was said he had taken the command of a privateer, and afterwards became a smuggler. It is rather unpleasant to have an uncle engaged in such

dishonourable pursuits; and though I am not proud, I took the liberty of disowning any connexion with him, when I met him by accident, in the same ship with me, on my voyage to America."

"I have heard, your father hated him from the time they were at school together; and, perhaps, he spoke worse of him than he deserved," said Margaret. "But, after all, he is no relation of yours, my dear Mr. Edward; and after his deserting your aunt, he is not likely to claim your acquaintance."

Mallory scarcely appeared to hear Mrs. West's words, for the striking of a church clock had suddenly recalled his appointment to meet Mathew Fuller to his mind. He had to speak to him, on a business which brooked no delay, and hastily arising, he told his old nurse, that he would return another day to see her, slipped a sovereign into her hand, and hurried from the cottage to escape her thanks.

Many and various thoughts thronged upon Edward Mallory's mind, as he hastened that evening, along the crowded streets, towards the place where Fuller had promised to meet him; yet, ever and anon, the fearful contrast of luxury and squalid misery, of the bright countenance of the honest, cheerful labourer, and the yellow, sunken, desponding faces of the ragged idlers, who glided from opium shops, or gin palaces, forcibly attracted his attention. Where poverty appeared the greatest, dirt, and vice, and reckless debauchery seized the sufferers as their irreclaimable prey, and the heart of the young emigrant was wrung with sorrow to behold such victims, festering in the hopeless corruption of densely peopled courts and alleys, when he remembered the wide plains and pleasant hills from whence he came, where their labour would be a treasure.

But there was one pleasant image, which seemed to walk for ever by his side, and though he had many causes for anxiety, they

were all forgotten, when he remembered old Margaret's assurance, that his brother Oswald had failed to make any impression on Mary Thornton's heart. To win that young girl's love for himself, and conduct her back to his new home, on the other side the Atlantic, had animated him to persevering labour from the time he had left his native land; and now, from all he had that day seen and heard, he trusted, that no obstacle would interpose, to prevent the accomplishment of his long cherished hopes.

Dreamers, or builders of castles in the air, as they are called in derision, by men devoid of imagination, are frequently ridiculed as unfit to cope with this world of cold realities, but were the secret of every heart revealed, we should probably discover that all persons of intelligence and feeling, have some secret aim in life, some future brighter than the present, which it is their ceaseless effort to attain, and

without which the dull monotony of ordinary existence would be a burthen insupportable.

And on a man's choice of such castles, depends a man's destiny for good or evil. The first love cherished by Mallory, for little Mary Thornton, had hung around him like a charmed atmosphere, amidst all the scenes of trial and temptation, to which, in his wandering life, he had been exposed. To earn an honourable livelihood, and a pleasant home for the object of his attachment, had been the aim of his labours; and this pure desire, had not only induced him to shun all evil, however fair the form in which it sought to delude, but had elevated his mind, and subdued and softened the natural impetuosity of his character.

On the contrary, the guiding impulse of which poor Mathew Fuller had made choice, had unfortunately neither been conducive to his prosperity, nor his happiness. In youth he had preferred pleasure to labour, and its

fruit had been bitterness, whereas the fruits of toil are sweet. He had been educated as an attorney; and was possessed of sufficient capital to secure an opening in the profession of the law; but he had never finished his studies; he had dissipated the money, and in middle life, he was a strolling-player, and a beggar, with a broken spirit, and a ruined constitution.

Yes, this man had received, what the world calls, education; the education of a great school; but his only moral education, had been a mother's foolish indulgence. Unfortunately, in this rich country, there are many like him who die yearly in a workhouse, victims of their own follies, and forgotten by all their jovial associates, who assisted in their ruin.

He had married early, a woman whom he tenderly loved, without remembering that she was penniless; and at the end of a year, she had died in his arms, leaving him an infant daughter to supply her place in his affections.

For months afterwards, the poor fellow had been in a state bordering on desperation! and it was during this period, that, to drown care, he had plunged into the wildest excesses, and wasted the small remnant of his little fortune at the gambling table. His subsequent life, until the evening he met Edward Mallory, had been a hard struggle to procure a scanty subsistence for himself and his little daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

In less than five minutes after Mathew Fuller parted from his early friend, he arrived at the door of the house where he lodged. It was in a filthy, unpaved, and undrained court, built up the side of a hill, in one of the worst parts of the great trading town of S——. From time to time, some of its poor inhabitants died of the noxious atmosphere which pervaded its tenements; but none of the high authorities of the town, who were constantly busy improving the paladial terraces overlooking the sea, or the promenades for the summer visitors, cared one straw about that.

It was true, there had recently been a great deal of conversation amongst the leading and

fashionable society there, about sanitary reforms, and intrigues had been set on foot, to procure for a London Architect, the lucrative employment of making drains; and a new water company had been started, at a vast expense, all for the benefit of the people; and the rates had been doubled, and a good deal of money had been pocketed, by certain gentlemen, who well understood how to make a job of everything; yet the town remained, with all its impurities, exactly in the same state as before the agitation began, and from the court where Mathew Fuller lived, the filth was never removed, except when a heavy rain performed the scavenger's office.

Cabbage stalks, and potato peelings, rotted away, polluting the air with their noxious odours, in the filthy cesspools before the doors; and swarms of ragged children, who had never entered a school, tumbled about, on mounds of ashes and broken pottery, with faces and hands as black as the polluted earth.

Fuller entered a house near the top of the hill, and walked straight up the narrow, creaking, dirty stairs, to a back room on the third floor. As he held the handle of the door for a moment in his slender fingers, an expression of painful anxiety came over his face. He then lifted the latch very softly, and bending forward, just peeped into the little chamber.

But the precaution was useless, for a fair girl about eleven years old, who sat at a table near the window, trimming a tawdry gauze dress with paper roses, instantly caught sight of him, and flinging all the finery she had gathered on her lap to the ground, she sprang up, clapped her hands with a laugh of the wildest glee, and her eyes sparkling with delight, her arms were in another moment, clasped round the neck of poor Mat Fuller, and she kissed him a dozen times, without pause, or interruption."

"Father! you naughty father!" she cried, "what has made you so late? I have got your

dress all ready. I have ironed out your old frill to look like new; I have put a patch so beautifully upon the elbow of your white jacket, that I am sure no old lady can see it, without spectacles;" and then she laughed, such a clear happy laugh, that a pang sharper than a dagger's wound, shot through the poor father's heart. "Oh yes," she continued, "you will be splendid, the people will clap you for half an hour, as soon as you appear."

"And you are dressed already, Lilly," said Fuller, stroking her head. "Let me look at you, my child," and he held her from him at arm's length, so as to have a complete view of her diminutive figure.

The girl was very small and slender for her age, but her limbs were beautifully formed, and her head was placed upon her shoulders, with the grace of an antique statue. Even early exposure to the weather, had cast no shade over the dazzling fairness of her skin, and her flaxen hair, and bright blue eyes, gave to her

childish loveliness, that angelic character, so rarely seen except in England."

The dress of spangled muslin and wild hyacinths, which she had woven amongst her hair, though worthless and fantastic, enhanced her beauty, as she stood exulting with innocent pride, in her successful toilet, awaiting her father's approbation.

"It will do, Lilly," he said, "it will do, all but the flowers; your wreath of mock roses, will look better in the lamps."

"Will they father," she answered with some disappointment. "I did not take them, they seemed so trumpery beside these sweet natural flowers—they look so very false!"

"Our whole trade is a lie, my child," said Mathew bitterly.

"Why don't we do something else, then, father?" inquired Lilly. "Surely you are so clever, you could do anything you pleased."

"Aye—some people said so once, my child—once long ago," murmured the poor man,

bending down his head to conceal the crimson blush which mounted to his forehead. "Lilly—my own dear Lilly," he added at length, in a voice tremulous from deep emotion, "try to do well when you are young, for it is too late to begin, when you grow old."

"I do try, all I can, father," she replied. "I have been working and practising my steps, all the time you have been away, and I should like to show you, how beautifully I can do them."

"We have no time now, my child," said poor Fuller, I must be dressed, and that quickly. Come here, and let me give you the last finishing touch, Lilly."

"The little girl laughed, and approaching her father, stood still close before him, looking up at him, with her bright, loving, innocent eyes fixed upon his face, whilst he drew a small box from his pocket, and took out of it a piece of rouge-stained cotton. His heart smote him, and his hand trembled, as he tinged the cheek

of his innocent child, with the brand of infamy; but she was all unconscious of wrong, and laughed with delight, as she peeped at her pretty face, in a fragment of a broken mirror.

"Poor child, it is not her fault," murmured the poor father, as he observed this little act of vanity, and remembered the denunciations of the preacher, which had so lately wrung his heart, with all the agonies of remorse and fear! but it was only a passing thought, for at that moment he had too much to do, for his mind to dwell long on abstractions.

"It is my turn to be dressed now, Lilly," he said, and I must make haste, or I shall be too late."

"I have put all your things ready," she returned, "and will sit on the stairs, and wait till you get ready."

"Take your cloak round you, my child," said Mathew; "there is chill draught, and you are thinly clad."

This the child did, and rolling herself up in

an old grey mantle, so as completely to conceal her spangled frock, she meekly and patiently took her place upon one of the steps of the narrow staircase.

Fuller looked sorrowfully after her, before he closed the door, for though, as far as regarded himself, he had become indifferent to all such things, he felt deeply for his child, the misery and the degradation of the position to which his youthful follies and extravagance had reduced her.

Little Lilly knew nothing of all this. Childhood is like a flower, which grows unconscious of its own position, requiring nothing but the means of nourishment to bloom gay and bright, either in the greenhouse, or by the wild hedge side. But her father felt, with remorse, that he had been compelled by his necessities, to lead her on a road that was beset with pitfalls and snares, and which could conduct only to destruction; and as, during the past months, he began to

perceive that he was no longer the strong man he had once been, his trouble and anxiety on her account, had recently much increased.

It has often been asserted, that the love between father and daughter, is the strongest and purest of all affections; if this be, under ordinary circumstances, the case, it was not wonderful, that the attachment of the broken-down gentleman, the ruined spendthrift, who had fallen the victim of thoughtless generosity, more than by deliberate vice, should, when deserted by all who once called themselves his friends, have become the engrossing passion of his soul.

Lilly was the angel sent to minister to him in the wilderness, to bring to his burning lips the pure waters of affection, when he would otherwise have sunk exhausted on his weary journey; to keep awake in his heart the better feelings of his nature, a trust in purity and innocence, and a hope of a hereafter.

She was, in his estimation, the most perfect

and precious creature that walked on the face of the earth; and though he detested the profession he taught her to exercise, he believed that none could have excelled in it, as she did. Yet it must be confessed, that, corrupted by long habit, and eager to forget his wretchedness, there were times when tempted by the possession of more money than ordinary, he left her to sleep unguarded, in their chamber, wherever that might be, and went to share it with wild and jov al companions, in some scene of low debauchery.

He knew how greatly he erred, but he had once been so much accustomed to the excitement, of what some men call pleasure, that he could not resist the temptation to renew it, whenever it came in his way. For above a year, deep repentance had always followed these excesses. Fuller was happy, as he called it, for hours, to be miserable for weeks afterwards. In one of the remorseful moods of mind he had first entered the chapel of the sect

called the Ranters, and was, for the time, powerfully impressed by their doctrines. But the natural gaiety of his character prevented him becoming a lasting convert to their passionate enthusiasm, and it was only at times, when some extraordinary anxiety preyed on his mind, that he returned to hear the voice of the preacher, in the building where Mallory had seen him. Even in this, as in all his other feelings, save his love for his child, was manifest the weak infirmity of purpose, which had greatly contributed to his ruin.

And poor little Lilly is sitting on the stairs all this while—and singing with unwearied patience, till her father has attired himself in his theatrical costume. Presently he appears in an old white Spanish suit, slashed with crimson satin, and a hat turned up in front, and adorned with a plume of feathers, which Lilly thinks becomes him wonderfully. His silk stockings are exceedingly pink, without which, they would have been exceedingly

yellow, and his low shoes have very large red bows upon them. And thus adorned, he is to walk through the streets, to the booth in the fair, where he and his little daughter are to perform, for the amusement of the public, who are expected in great numbers, to behold these favorite actors, in a sanguinary melodrama, after paying two pence a piece, for admission. He wraps a cloak about him, so as to conceal the whole of his splendour, except his cloak and his hat, and the people in the neighbourhood have got used to these, and cease to stare at them, for it is fair time, and the company of strolling players and rope dancers, has been in the town for a week. Yes, repetition by engendering habit, renders all things easy, whether they be vices or virtues. Let all men, and women too, remember that for the choice of habits, is the choice of destiny, and decides whether a human creature is to become the slave of ignorance, vice, and misery, or emancipated from their control, arise, in defiance

even of poverty, to a sphere of pure and virtuous thought, and honourable activity.

Though the heart of Mat Fuller, that night, was very sad, his extempore jokes and comic grimaces, drew down thunders of applause, from a crowd of the lowest class, which had assembled to witness his performance. But the dancing of Lilly excited unbounded enthusiasm. It was not that she did anything exceedingly extraordinary for a child of her age; for her father had been her only instructor; but innocence, and beauty, and grace, find their way at once, to the best feelings of the great popular heart, and awaken its warm emotions. A sympathy with these, may be educated, or it may be deadened, by selfishness in the higher classes; and a rude struggle with poverty in the lowest; but the Creator has bestowed it upon all, and wise are they who guard it as their choicest treasure.

To some of that rude audience, who, though they came forth from filthy courts and narrow

lanes, possessed the gift of imagination, Lilly appeared the very personification of the half developed images of beauty, which had often tormented, yet sometimes cheered, them ; whilst the hearts of strong and turbulent men were softened by pity and compassion as they watched her pretty movements, unlike all they had ever thought of, or seen before. But there was no one present, who gazed at the little girl with such loving admiration as her own father. He forgot the horror of her position, and exulted in the triumph of the moment.

Mallory had not failed to be present in the theatre, during the last performance of the 'Fatal Secret,' which had been repeated three times in the course of the day. Though he did not know that Mat Fuller had a daughter in the company, he observed the profound interest manifested by the poor player during the child's performance. Still, this was not sufficient cause for supposing that any relationship existed between them, for even he, though he

saw her for the first time, felt pity and tender admiration for this innocent creature—and whils he gazed on her dancing, revolved in his mind, the possibility of rescuing her from the dangers which inevitably awaited her in her present course of life.

Lilly had two dances to perform in the first piece ; and when one of these was over, Mathew Fuller received her, as he was accustomed to do, behind the scenes, and carefully wrapped an old cloak about her. He then kissed her, and told her that he had been called away by a friend, who wished to speak with him for a few minutes on business, and that, as his part in the amusements of the evening was concluded, he was going away directly ; but would return without fail, in less than a quarter of an hour, to take her home.

" She must sit down and wait for him behind the scenes," he said, " after she had finished dancing."

The little girl, who was accustomed to obey

her father implicitly, promised to do all he desired. But still, she did not like being left alone amongst the rude actors, and she was particularly afraid of a cross, fat, old lady, who played step-mothers, and witches. To escape the observation of this ogress, who was always scolding, whether on or off the stage, Lilly crept away behind one of the shifting scenes, where she was sure of remaining undiscovered, though she could readily see her father the moment he returned.

The audience all dispersed at the conclusion of the performance; the actors disappeared from the temporary theatre, and adjourned to a public-house; even the fat lady, after bustling about for some time, at length, closed the door behind her, and carried off the key in her capacious pocket.

The unusual stillness around her first made Lilly aware that she was left alone, and when she observed that all the lights were extinguished in the building, she felt somewhat

alarmed—more especially, when the wild beasts in a neighbouring show began to growl furiously; but then, remembering that they could not reach her, and hoping that her father would not tarry much longer, she tried to think of walking with him in a meadow, to gather cowslips—and thus dreaming, she fell asleep.

The person whom Fuller had been summoned to attend, was the manager of a rival company of strolling players, who, having heard of the fame of his little daughter, had come to tempt him by promises of higher payment, to quit his present employer.

These worthy men both became weary, before long, of carrying on their negotiation in the street; so, when Fuller hinted at the unpleasant consequences which might ensue, were he seen by his director of the theatre in the company of his opponent, that dignitary invited him to adjourn their conference to a public-house.

Edward Mallory had quitted the rude

theatre with the rest of the audience, without the slightest suspicion that little Lilly alone was left behind.

The melo-drama he had seen, had proved highly acceptable to most of the beholders, who had wept at the high-flown and false sentiment of lovers and murderers — been deeply interested by the dangerous adventures of a profligate hero—and laughed, with infinite glee, at the very flat and coarse jokes of a vulgar clown.

It was with deep regret that he had seen the sympathies of the people wasted on such a vile composition; for the deep interest they had manifested, was a true evidence of the poetic feeling, which sleeps in the heart of the multitude, ever ready, when properly excited, to elevate the popular mind above the gloom of daily toil and deprivation into regions of romance, of moral justice, and ideal beauty. Edward had felt that evening, whilst he listened to the burst of indignation from the

rude audience, at the spectacle of some act of desperate villany, that a powerful means for the improvement of the lower order, by pure and noble writing, was here allowed to go to waste. He was more than ever convinced, that to benefit a people by education, their passions and imaginations must be addressed and directed aright, as well as instruction given to the intellect. But in the performance he that evening witnessed, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, purity and corruption, were recklessly mixed together, by a vulgar scribbler, who had no better object than to amuse by excitement, and draw money from the pockets of an audience. It might be far otherwise, were the amusements of the people an object of interest with philanthropists, as well as their scholastic training.

He was slowly crossing the market-place amidst the crowd, when, to his surprise, a hand was laid upon his arm, and a deep voice whispered in his ear—

"Is it possible, that I find Mr. Edward Mallory in a place of such low resort?"

Edward turned instantly, and met the piercing glance of a man, whose large, flashing black eyes were staring at him with intense curiosity.

He was a tall, athletic, healthy personage, though probably above fifty years of age. His skin was dark and sunburnt, wherever it was left visible, by a very bushy black beard and whiskers. Only a few grey hairs were visible in his thick hair, which curled around his large, massive head. His dress was good, and rather showy; but not that of an English gentleman. His whole appearance bespoke him to be a daring, dashing captain of a trading vessel, who had once been handsome, and a man of pleasure, and had not yet forgotten the lawless habits of his youth.

He was certainly a man with whom Edward Mallory had no desire to renew any acquaintance, which might previously have existed

between them, and his countenance at once expressed his annoyance, at being thus addressed.

This did not escape the stranger's quick observation, but he was neither offended nor abashed; he only laughed, and kept close at the gentleman's side, as he left the booth. He was evidently determined to force his company upon him.

"So, Mr. Edward," he said, as they walked along the open street, "you have not found America to your taste, it appears. When we went over in the same ship together, I thought England would soon see you back again. Colonizing does not do for delicate young gentlemen, with white hands and well trimmed nails, who find it hard work at home, even to carry a gun about on their shoulders, for their own amusement. They are soon taught in the back settlements, that they must put their shoulders to the wheel, if they mean to do any good in America, and they don't like that.

They were not brought up to it, poor dears, and in our English colonies, they hang about the government-house, and smoke cigars with the officers, till all their little capital is spent, and then they come home again, worse off than before they went. I suppose you have been doing something of the same kind, Mr. Edward."

"And by what right do you presume to occupy yourself at all about my affairs?" demanded the young man, turning suddenly and sternly on his companion, and regarding him with a firmness, if not an audacity equal to his own.

"A pretty question, from my wife's own nephew," returned the seaman with a good humoured, impudent laugh. "Why you must know me, Mr. Edward? you must know I served on board the same frigate with your father, and married his sister. You cannot pretend to say, that you have forgotten Richard Blake, a descendent of the renowned admiral of that name, once himself a Lieutenant in her

Majesty's service, and having no longer that honour, now a very successful trader, on his own account."

"Yes, I know you," answered Mallory. "I know likewise, many parts of your history, which you have now omitted, and which make me have no desire to renew our acquaintance."

"Ha! sits the wind in that quarter?" returned Blake, with a long low whistle, "I heard you refused to play the hypocrite, and become a parson, when you had no special gift of piety to fit you for such a calling, and that in consequence, you had been a citizen of the world, like myself, for the last four years, so I thought you had probably got rid of a few of your early prejudices. But, as it appears, I am mistaken, I shall seek more congenial company. I can tell you a few things about your father's affairs that concern you, but I shall reserve them, till you are more amicably disposed. Good evening to you."

So saying, Blake began to whistle the air of

Yankie Doodle, and walking away without other salutation, was soon lost among the crowd.

Edward Mallory rejoiced at getting so easily rid of a man, whom, from his earliest years, he had been taught to regard with a feeling of mistrust, and abhorrence, and in whose company he felt it would have been a disgrace to be recognised, more especially, when excluded from his father's house, he appeared for the first time, after an absence of four years, in the neighbourhood of his home.

He was anxious, also, to meet Mathew Fuller alone; but though the hour of the actor's appointment had arrived, he vainly sought for him in the market-place and the neighbouring streets.

CHAPTER VII.

On the brass plate affixed to a very grim looking door, in the high street of the town of S——, of an old fashioned, large, brick house, in deep cut letters, appeared the words, *Parkins and Co., Solicitors.*

This plate was the only bright thing about the whole building, for even when the sun shone upon the small-paned, heavy-framed windows, the glass was too dirty to reflect the rays. The brick walls were faced with stone, like a court livery turned up with white, but now dingy with age and smoke, very much resembled such gay attire, when it has descended through many gradations, to the back of an old street sweeper. In fact, everything had a cast off air about the place. Even the.

master himself, who was sitting in a dusty back room, amidst piles of musty yellow deeds, at a very inky desk, was attired in a suit of black, which a pawnbroker would have refused to take as a pledge.

Yet Mr. Parkins, in his youth, was very proud that he had been born in that house; his father had lived in it for more than fifty years, and Mr. Parkins, Senior, was reported to have made there, what the world, forty years ago, called a very good fortune.

But the ideas of prefessional men concerning fortunes have very much enlarged since those days, and the wives of professional gentlemen have also very different ideas of spending them.

Mrs. Parkins, the wife of the present owner of the brick mansion, who was the accomplished daughter of a grocer, would no more have condescended to live in that antiquated house, in the High Street of S——, than the first lady in waiting to the Queen, would have taken up

her residence in Wapping. She was, in her own estimation, the most elegant, and aristocratic personage in the town; so, with her lovely daughter, who was just come out, she occupied an Italian Villa on the cliff, and gave parties, and rolled about in her carriage, paying visits, and talking scandal, whilst Mr. Parkins was sitting toiling in his counting house.

And the lawyer was quite content with this arrangement. He was proud that his family should be fine, whilst he delighted in that exercise of power and keen intellect, which he found in his profession; and, above all, he delighted in cunning schemes for making money. He certainly was very successful.

He could have governed the whole town if one man had not stood in his way, who, with a head as long as his own, had very different principles. That man was Mr. Gerard.

Mr. Parkins was agent for half the absentee gentlemen in the county; he had mortgages on many of their estates, and he profitted

largely by both. He was consequently a staunch Protectionist, he also managed the electioneering interest of the Borough, and this business was better paid than any other.

Mr. Parkins was therefore very rich, but he wished to become richer; not content with the certain profits of his profession, he joined in extensive iron works, with Sir Thomas Mallory, and for the sake of being readily accommodated with money for his speculations in railroads and other ways, committed the very great blunder of becoming a share-holder, in a Joint Stock Bank. To those who did not know him thoroughly, it must have appeared strange, why he took so much trouble, for he did not seem to care about money when he got it; but he did like it, in the depths of his heart, he liked to know that he had it, and that it gave him consequence.

And he never felt his own importance, with more entire self satisfaction, and never laughed at mankind for being such fools as to bow

down and cringe in the dust, before other men's gold, with more triumph than he did on that day, when Edward Mallory was looking for Mathew Fuller. He had been about half an hour employed in examining the documents which afforded him so much exultation, when there was a sharp knock at the street door. A very pompous footstep sounded, immediately afterwards, on the stairs, and then, Sir Thomas Mallory was announced.

The Baronet was really a handsome man for his age, with a bald head, and florid complexion; he bore a striking resemblance to his eldest son, and had, what is considered, a very aristocratic appearance; no one could deny that he looked like a perfect gentleman. There was nothing about him which could be found fault with, except the expression of his countenance. The features of his face were well formed, but coldheartedness, tyranny, and inordinate self-esteem were there most legibly written. He had served in the navy before

his title and fortune had descended to him, from an uncle, and was even then remarkable for his extravagance and his insolence. His narrow intellect and extreme pride, had greatly unfitted him for the management, even of his own affairs, and he trusted entirely in men of business; though he at the same time despised them, as beings of an inferior class.

Yet Sir Thomas was mean enough to court the society of those about him, and in a ridiculous imitation of their vices, he had rapidly diminished his fortune. Cheated by his agents, and plundered by those whom he called his friends, he found himself in middle life, involved in very serious embarrassments, which were afterwards greatly increased by the extravagance of his eldest son. A family living had been the only means he possessed of providing for Edward, his second child, and when the young man refused to enter the church, he banished him in anger from his presence, sold the living to the best bidder, and was very

well satisfied that the affair had taken this turn.

Mr. Parkins, in a quiet way, had greatly assisted the ruin of his patron. He had lent him money whenever he required it, as long as he found good security. He had sold him seventy small cottages, which had been built before the Reform Bill, in order to make votes, and in those days of aristocratic representation, commanded the return of one member for the borough. Sir Thomas had paid him twenty thousand pounds for these miserable hovels, only a short time before they were rendered utterly worthless by the parliamentary reform. He had repeatedly advised the Baronet to buy railway shares, by which he invariably lost. Finally, when his income was fearfully reduced, and he was eager to catch at any investment which promised large returns, Mr. Parkins had persuaded him to take shares in a great iron factory, recently established in the town, for which he mortgaged an estate to procure suffi-

cient funds. But the active partners in the concern, who had nothing, asserted that enormous fortunes were to be made in an incredibly short space of time, and Sir Thomas Mallory believed them, and increased his expenditure in consequence.

This mania was at its height, when about a month before Edward Mallory's return, there was a sudden obstruction in the iron trade. The workmen, who had saved nothing when well paid, were suddenly reduced to short wages; and the masters, who would gladly have been rid of them altogether for a time, were very much disappointed that they manifested no intention to strike. Mr. Parkins had done all in his power to make them, but he had hitherto been disappointed. As he was one of the most active shareholders in the iron-works, he had, at this time, a great deal of business on his hands. Whether it was likely to turn out to his profit, or his loss, nobody could form any reasonable idea; but some men said, that

Mr. Parkins never lost. He sat on one side, in his dark corner, ready to pounce upon every poor, unwary fly, that got entangled in his nets, and when he had sucked them dry, they disappeared, and were no more heard of.

Everything he did, was done legally and in order, no doubt; flies don't understand law, and spiders do; and it is not their fault, if flies are greedy, or quarrelsome fools. So Mr. Parkins was very rich, and nobody had any right to complain.

Even Sir Thomas Mallory, in spite of his great losses, never seemed to suspect that any blame could be attached to his solicitor. He considered him, as he had always done, a very oracle in matters of business; and though he had a sort of friendly, patronising indulgence for him, as a man so far beneath him, that he was highly honoured by his notice, he felt perfectly assured, that he had his interest most sincerely at heart. He, in return, was ready to do all in his power, for his friend Parkins.

He had even gone the length of inviting Mrs. and Miss Parkins to dinner at Stoke Court, for which attention, the lawyer had expressed himself particularly obliged. The young lady had talked of nothing, but Mr. Oswald Mallory, to all her intimate friends, ever since.

Sir Thomas Mallory came into the lawyer's office, that afternoon, with a prodigious bustle; Mr. Parkins received him very quietly.

"Well, my dear sir," he said, as soon as he was seated, "how are we going on? eh! got any rent from those confounded cottages?"

"I grieve to say, not a shilling, Sir Thomas," replied the man of business. "Since the wages were lowered at the iron-works, the men say they really cannot pay."

"They are an abominable set of scoundrels!" cried the Baronet. "They have money enough to spend on radical journals, I have no doubt of it. Cannot you turn them out, and get tenants who will pay?"

"It is no easy matter, in these days," said

the lawyer; "and, moreover, Sir Thomas, I am sorry to tell you, that though we get no rent, we shall be compelled to pay the poor rates on these houses, for the occupiers neither will, nor can."

The Baronet stared with open eyes. He did not quite understand this announcement.

"What!" he cried, "pay poor rates on houses for which I get no rent! that is rather too ridiculous!"

"But it is true, nevertheless," replied Parkins. "Such, my dear sir, is the defective state of the law, in these reforming days. The poor must be maintained, and the landlords are made to bear the whole burthen. I am deeply grieved, Sir Thomas, that I was the innocent cause of such property coming into your possession; but I gave it up to secure your return; your radical opponent would have bought it, if you had not; and I could not bear to see the first gentleman in the county turned out by an upstart shipowner. I assure

you, when I sold it to you, I did it with the very best intentions."

"I never doubted it," was the reply. "Make no apologies! I beg you will make no apologies. I am convinced you have my interest most sincerely at heart. It was all the fault of the confounded Reform Bill, or those cottages would have secured me a snug seat for the Borough to the end of my life. And when I bought them, a seat in Parliament was worth something, if filled by a man of family. The Reformers have been the ruin of the country gentlemen, in every possible way. It is really too bad, if I am not to get a farthing for the cottages. The bill for repairs was fifty pounds last year."

"I told the tenants so," said Parkins, blandly; "but when I ask a man for rent, he puts the key under the door and disappears."

"Rubbishing old holes!" cried Sir Thomas, impatiently; "they are nothing but a nest

for vagabonds and scoundrels, and had better be all pulled down at once."

"That can hardly be done, sir," answered the lawyer. "There are more than three hundred men, women, and children, who would thus be rendered houseless. The union could not take them all in."

"What the devil do I care for that." cried the Baronet. "The workhouse must take them in! I pay rates enough, certainly."

The lawyer saw that the gentleman was warm, and as he did not agree with him, he thought it better to turn the subject.

"It appears," he said, "that our workmen are dissatisfied that we have lowered their wages, after making such large profits as we have done lately; and I think it very likely that some outrage will ensue, unless we can induce Mr. Gerard and others to do the same."

"Gerard again," cried the Baronet; "that man is always in our way. I hate his very name."

"I must confess you have some cause," replied Mr. Parkins; and he just opened his lips, so as to show his teeth, with an expression of peculiar, cat-like satisfaction.

"I believe he has never forgiven my refusing him my sister's hand, in early life, and takes a pleasure in thwarting me," said Sir Thomas, in the same angry tone as before.

"Very likely," answered the bland attorney. "He certainly has a particular aversion to Conservative principles. He has recently received a deputation from his men, and has agreed to all the terms they pleased to impose upon him."

"Let him do as he likes, that is no concern of ours," returned Sir Thomas; "his father was a miner; and it is quite natural for a fellow of such low extraction, to have some sympathy with the rabble; but that is no reason why gentlemen should submit to be dictated to, and give up their own interests, to gratify the restless ambition of rascally demo-

crats, who will never be satisfied, till they have turned the kingdom upside down."

"I am entirely of your opinion," responded Parkins, obsequiously. "These fellows must be made to feel, that they are the mere slaves of capital. The rights of labour are all humbug. The labourers may fancy what they please; but the capitalist has them in his power, for they must starve, if he does not employ them; and he is a fool, if any preaching about philanthropy, and justice, and such stuff, induces him to listen to dictation from the weaker party. Therefore, whatever demands may be made of us, I advise, that they should be strenuously resisted."

"Then you are afraid of a strike," returned the Baronet, anxiously. "May not that be an injury to our concern?"

"Not at all, my good sir, not at all," replied Parkins, with more animation than usual. "It might be quite as well for us, were our workshops closed for a month or two; if the men

strike, they will only starve themselves, and exhaust the savings which make them presumptuous; but it can do us no harm. We shall get rid of our old stock, and we shall have them afterwards on our own terms."

"Well, I suppose you understand these affairs," answered Sir Thomas, with infinite importance, "I confess I do not. I understand nothing but the landed interest, although, since that has been ruined, for the benefit of the commercial interest, I have found it necessary to endeavour—ahem—to find some compensation for my losses, by taking shares in this iron speculation; but it is a great degradation, Mr. Parkins. I cannot conceal from myself, that it is an enormous degradation, for a man, whose name is on the roll of Battle Abbey, to soil his fingers by dirty commerce. Sir, I blush to say, I am the first of my family, through a long line of honourable ancestors, whose name was ever associated with trade—I am the first of my family who ever took any

any active part in trade—or, in fact—I may say—did anything at all."

"I believe you," said Parkins, drily, "I can fully enter into your feelings, my dear sir. It must, indeed, be very trying to a man of ancient family—one of our most respectable members of the aristocracy—to see his name, from time to time, in the country newspapers, at the head of a collection of Smiths, and Browns, and Higginses. But you know, Sir Thomas, this is one of the signs of the times! you are not singular. Money governs everything, and every body; and to get money, a duke will dine with a linendraper. Railway kings and cotton lords are on a par, now, with the proudest of our aristocracy, if they have only money enough."

"That is some consolation!" was the old gentleman's reply. "But, hitherto, my speculations have diminished my fortune, instead of increasing it."

"You must have patience, Sir Thomas," re-

turned the wily attorney. "Only persevere, and there can be no doubt, that, in a short time, you will suddenly find yourself indemnified for all your losses."

"Well, I hope so, indeed," was the reply, "for my son, Oswald, requires a great deeal of money. His position makes it necessary for him to spend a great deal of money. If I had the wealth of Crœsus, he would scatter it all in a month."

"Many noblemen would be delighted to have such an eldest son," said Parkins, smiling again—if smile it could be called, which, for a moment, relaxed the severity of his rigid features.

"Yes, he is a noble fellow!" replied the Baronet, proudly. "A gentleman to the very back bone."

"Very like yourself, Sir Thomas."

"It has been thought so," was the grave and proud rejoinder, for though Sir Thomas waspleased by fattery, he accepted it as his

due. He had been so worshipped by sycophants all his life, that it seemed to him a mere matter of course.

"That puts me in mind," he added, "Oswald wants money, and so do I. Have you got any of last half year's rents in hand?"

"I am sorry to say, your account is already overdrawn a thousand pounds," was the lawyer's cool reply, and he thrust his hand into his waistcoat, and leaned back in his chair, with a calm air of effrontery, which contrasted strangely with the embarrassment of the proud old Baronet, who, stupid as he was, began to feel a very unpleasant consciousness that he was in this man's power.

"A thousand pounds overdrawn!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, blushing scarlet, even to the top of his head, "a very odd thing, indeed. I had no idea of that."

"The interest of the mortgages runs away with a large sum," was the cool reply.

"But, my dear sir, I must have money!

you don't suppose that I can live at Stoke Court, and have a house in town, without money? The thing is impossible, Mr. Parkins."

"But you must be very well aware that I cannot make money," said the man of business.

"It must be found somewhere," said his client. "Bills have been sent down from London, for the expenses there last spring, which must be met, to the amount of three thousand pounds—there are calls for advances on those confounded railroads, to the amount of two thousand more—and I know not what beside. Here are a dozen documents I cannot be at the trouble of reading; you will be so good as to look them over at your leisure," and, taking several letters from his pocket, he flung them on the table as he spoke. "If I cannot meet my liabilities, I am a ruined man—so money must be had on any terms."

"This case seems desperate, certainly," re-

plied the lawyer, after glancing over the papers, "and really there is only one way, it appears to me, by which you can be extricated. Either you or your son must marry an heiress. It is your last resource."

"For myself, that day is gone by," answered Sir Thomas, with great dignity; "though I must admit, I had many opportunities of forming a wealthy alliance, when I had no necessity to sell myself. As to Oswald, I am not aware that any young lady of his acquaintance is worthy of him."

Mr. Parkins cleared his throat very audibly; but, before he could reply to this pompous declaration, he was suddenly called out of the room by his head clerk, who said that a person wished to speak with him on very urgent business.

With a slight apology to Sir Thomas Mallory, he left him to ponder over his embarrassments, in no very enviable frame of mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sir Thomas Mallory remained nearly half an hour alone in his attorney's office, and very indignant at being treated with such disrespect by a man of that class; he would have departed in a very great passion, had not his want of money made it impossible for him to return home without, at least, the prospect of obtaining a supply, and there was no one but Mr. Parkins from whom he could expect assistance in such an emergency. There is nothing which humbles a proud man so effectually as debt. And whilst it crushes the spirit of the great, it bows down the humble to the lowest depths of degradation.

At length, Mr. Parkins returned, and silently

resumed his seat; but his countenance wore an expression of anxiety, it had not before betrayed.

"Nothing unpleasant, I hope?" enquired Sir Thomas, endeavouring to conceal all appearance of discontent.

"Not to me," answered Parkins, coolly. "A person came to give me warning that your coachmaker intends to put an execution in Stoke Court, unless his bill is paid before this day week."

"Ah! I am not surprised; I told you how it would be," was the reply.

A silence of several minutes followed, which was very embarrassing to the Baronet.

"You have frequently advanced me money, Mr. Parkins," he began, at length.

"Yes, Sir Thomas, very frequently," was the caustic rejoinder.

"Perhaps you may be able to do so again?"

"Yes, no doubt, on proper security; but I have a very exact knowledge of your affairs,

and I beg your pardon, but I cannot see what security you have to offer."

Had Sir Thomas been in prosperity he would have resented such language, but he had now the sense to know that he had better hold his tongue.

"I am sorry to say," continued the lawyer, "that were my accounts all clearly made out, you would find yourself to be much deeper in my debt than I have ever allowed any other man to be. I must speak plainly, Sir Thomas, the time for delicacy is past. This state of things cannot go on. I cannot involve myself in difficulties, merely to postpone your ruin."

"Good heavens, sir, this is strong language," exclaimed the Baronet, now in a rage past all control. "You surely forget who I am?"

"Not in the least," replied the placid attorney. "But it would be folly to conceal from you, your real condition. You are on the eve of bankruptcy!"

"Sir, are you mad?" cried his client. "I may have temporary embarrassments, but what, in the name of all things honourable, can Sir Thomas Mallory of Stoke Court, one of the largest landed proprietors in the county, have to do with bankruptcy?"

"You forget, you have become a trader," answered Parkins, with a smile. "You are one of us now, Sir Thomas, and as liable to be made a bankrupt as the lowest dealer in marine stores."

The manner of the lawyer as he uttered these words, was calm and cruelly sarcastic. He felt, at that moment, that he was at length revenged for the long years of friendly insolence with which he had been treated by the Baronet. The effect his words produced, even surpassed his anticipations. The head and hands of Sir Thomas shook like the leaves on an aspen. A cold perspiration burst out from all his pores. He became one moment perfectly scarlet, the next as livid as a corpse.

He attempted to speak, but an incoherent sound, was all that issued from his lips. Parkins expected to see him fall down in a fit, and feared that he had gone somewhat too suddenly and roughly to work. But he was mistaken. Sir Thomas had to pay a much greater penalty for his vices and his follies, before his bodily strength gave way.

"For heaven's sake, Mr. Parkins, why did you never inform me of this before I incurred such terrible liabilities?" were the first words he found breath to utter.

"I imagined, that a magistrate must at least understand enough of the law, to comprehend his own position," returned the attorney, very blandly. "But I beg your pardon, I am your legal adviser, it is true, and I confess I have been to blame. But the thing is done, and there is nothing for it now, but to avoid the disgrace of bankruptcy, if it be possible."

"And surely with my estates, it must be possible," responded Sir Thomas, whose facul-

ties seemed completely bewildered. "You have vast talents for business, Parkins, and I feel confident, that if my credit can be saved, you are the only man capable of doing it."

This admission was what the wily lawyer had intrigued, for many years, to obtain. His humbled victim was at his feet, ready to accept any terms of accommodation he chose to propose.

"You are aware that there is a mortgage for ten thousand pounds on the Plimpton estate, the interest of which has not been paid for two years," he began, "and the parties threaten to foreclose."

"Oh, yes, I know it all!" cried the Baronet; "what the deuce has become of all the money, is the thing which puzzles me."

"Do you wish to inspect my accounts?" inquired Mr. Parkins, blandly.

"No! no! for heaven's sake, no! I detest the very name of accounts. Only tell me where money is to be found."

"I fear, you take me, my dear sir, for a cleverer man, than I am; I really have no gold mine at my disposal; and yet, Sir Thomas, you are an old friend, and I would gladly oblige you. I have in fact, already done more than I ought, perhaps, and yet I would inconvenience myself, and become responsible for all your most pressing debts, on one condition."

"Name it, for heaven's sake, name it," cried his client, eagerly. "Under such circumstances, there is nothing I can refuse you."

But the lawyer was not so impetuous. He polished his nails with a penknife, for a minute or two, and seemed quite absorbed by the labour, till suddenly looking up, he fixed his large, keen black eyes, which rarely regarded any man in the face for two seconds together, full on the eyes of the old man, with such a peculiar expression that the Baronet felt more uncomfortable than ever.

At length Parkins spoke.

"Now, Sir Thomas," he said, "I will be

explicit. I intimated to you just now, that it would be advisable for your son to make an advantageous marriage. I have a marriageable daughter; her portion will not be insignificant, and on condition of her becoming Mrs. Oswald Mallory, within two months, I am willing to extricate you from all your present difficulties."

"Sir! Mr. Parkins! the thing is impossible!" cried Sir Thomas, arising and pacing the room with unbridled indignation. "My son, the heir of an ancient name, can never ally himself to the daughter of an attorney."

"Very well, as you please; the girl can readily make a better match; but before you decidedly reject my proposal, may I beg you to remember a certain passage of your history—a little transaction between us, about twenty years ago, when I was foolish enough to gratify your wishes, and to incur a great personal responsibility, by the destruction of certain papers after the death of Lady Mallory. Ah,

you understand me, I see! It was a family affair, certainly, and you seemed to think it could be easily arranged, but now your youngest son is of age, and unless our interests are united by this marriage, unpleasant disclosures might be made."

"Ah, upon my soul! You allude, I suppose, to the affair of the marriage settlement. I had nearly forgotten all about it," replied Sir Thomas, again seating himself, and turning very pale. "The boy has claims, that is true enough. But I thought we agreed, I could make him a compensation, when the time came. It was a mere matter of accommodation, you know. Nobody can be the worse for it, and I understood you, that there was no danger of anything being said about it."

"Not as long as we remain friends," answered Parkins, with marked emphasis.

"And I trust we shall never be otherwise," said Mallory, quickly.

"Never certainly, by my desire," was the

attorney's reply, "but you must feel, Sir Thomas, that the duties of friendship, are not all on one side. If I am to do much for you, I must expect something in return. My daughter's happy establishment in life, is the object I have nearest at heart. She is a fine girl, to whom your son can make no reasonable objection."

"But should his affections be otherwise engaged?" returned Sir Thomas in great embarrassment.

"I should advise you, in that case, to tell him the truth. Young gentlemen's affections now-a-days, are a very transferable commodity. You must, if you meet with any opposition, explain everything clearly to him, and that will suffice to overcome his reluctance, depend upon it."

"What, about the marriage settlement?" demanded Sir Thomas, with consternation.

"No need of that," answered the lawyer, as calmly as before. "In fact, that is a secret,

which must remain for ever buried between ourselves. Profoundly.—That is rather more than a mere matter of business," and he gave the Baronet one of his rapid, flashing glances, the only light by which the smouldering fire in the depths of his deep heart, was ever manifested. It was a withering light, like the destructive fire from an overcharged thunder-cloud, and the old man quailed beneath it. "We have only faithfully to guard our own secret," he continued, "and we have then nothing to apprehend. It was a very fortunate thing, your second son departed to America, and I only wish he may stay there. In the meanwhile, you will allow me to conclude, that you are willing to do everything in your power, to forward our family alliance. I think my reasons must have convinced you of its expediency."

"I will speak to my son on the subject, and let you know the result," was the reply.

"Tell him, the girl will have fifty thousand pounds on her marriage, and large expectations.

Money will influence him, for I know he is fond of pleasure. I confess to you, Sir Thomas, that unless Mr. Oswald were the eldest son of a Baronet, he is not exactly the man I should select for my daughter's husband."

"Sir," exclaimed the old man, to whom this insolence was so astounding, that he could not utter more.

Nor did the lawyer leave him time to do so; hastily starting up, he looked at his watch, and begged the Baronet's pardon for leaving him; adding, that he had an appointment in the town, and was already half an hour too late.

Sir Thomas was indignant, but considered it beneath him, to show that he considered it possible, for a fellow like Parkins to treat him with intentional disrespect. He arose, therefore, with a hughty air, said that he also had an engagement, and wished the lawyer good evening.

As soon as Mr. Parkins was left alone, he proceeded to exchange his threadbare coat, for one of a more modern date, which he took

down from a peg in an inner closet. He buttoned it close up across his breast, with a peculiar feeling of satisfaction, and then softly whistling in a low note, somewhat resembling the purring of a cat, he brushed his glossy hat, and placed it carefully on his sleek, dark head.

There was a pleasant exulting sense of prosperity and success at his heart, which made his eyes glitter, with more than their usual brightness, and gave his steps, an unwonted elasticity, as he went down the high street that evening. It is singular, how often this feeling is the precursor of misfortune.

There were certain persons, with whom Mr. Parkins had frequent dealings, whom he would by no means have liked to receive openly in his office. It was to hold a conference with one of these low agents of his intrigues, that he went, as the day was fading into dusky twilight, into a low public house, in a back street near the Quay, the very same place of public entertainment where Mathew Fuller

was going, at that time, to confer with his friend the manager.

The man who received Mr. Parkins in a sanded back parlour, was the very last person in the town, with whom any one would have suspected the aristocratic solicitor, of holding communication. He was middle aged, and shabilly dressed, tall, lank and bony. His nose was high and very red; his forehead projecting, but narrow; his small grey eyes had a very sinister expression, and two large projecting teeth, rendered it impossible for him to bring his lips together. He had scarcely any beard, or whiskers, and both were exceedingly closely shaved, whilst a low white neckcloth, left his smooth pink jaws, totally uncovered. He was the lowest pettifogging attorney in the place; but he had remarkably plausible manners, when it suited his purpose to be agreeable. He was ostensibly a great radical, an eloquent orator at the assemblies of the working classes, the attorney who defended all the workmen's

cases, good, bad or indifferent, before the magistrates; the chairman of several of their democratic societies, in the town, and above all, the treasurer of the Trades' Union.

Mr. Atkins had sufficient sense to know, that neither his talents, nor his education, qualified him to make money by the upper classes, and so he had very shrewdly determined to turn the ignorance and sufferings of the lower orders to his own account. He had just knowledge enough of law to make his poor misguided victims believe, that he was the only man in the town, having their real interest at heart, who was capable of defending them against the injustice of their employers; and most adroitly he aggravated every misunderstanding between masters and workmen, in order to draw a pro fit for himself, from both.

The people regarded Atkins as a great social reformer, the sincere friend of the labouring classes; Mr. Parkins knew that he went amongst them, only as a spy, and a traitor, who

was ready, at his bidding, to excite them by inflammatory harangues, by the circulation of violent tracts, and the dissemination of falsehoods, so that a cry might be raised about the excesses of socialism, and chartism, and such enormities, whenever it was thought necessary, thus to aid the cause of re-action.

It was to direct this worthy agent to commence an agitation amongst the workmen, with all possible promptitude, that Mr. Parkins had appointed a meeting with him that evening at the Black Bull. And Mr. Atkins was very ready to agree to the suggestions of his patron, for, in his capacity of treasurer to various societies, he had, at that time, nearly one thousand pounds of the poor workmens' hard earned savings in his hands, and he knew that any strike, or other disturbance, which compelled them to draw on this fund for their temporary maintenance, would enable him to appropriate a pretty considerable portion of it;

for he was perfectly aware there was no existing law by which he could be called to account for the funds of un-incorporated societies.

So, these two unprincipled men—the aristocrat and the radical, who lived, one by the plunder of the rich, and the other by the plunder of the poor—held their secret conclave; and though, to all outward show, as widely separated from each other as the craters of two volcanos in opposite spheres, they were, in their hidden union, equally active in secretly undermining the moral foundations of society. And all this for gain; for no nobler ambition than the miserable lust for money.

"It won't do for the men to go on in unbroken prosperity much longer," said Parkins; "their heads are half turned already, by Mr. Gerard's philanthropic fooleries. This mechanic's institute, and library, and lectures, and such radical innovations, are weaning them from the ale-house, so that they will soon un-

derstand their own interests too well to be kept down. A little poverty and starvation would best put an end to their studies."

"Over time—that is double labour—is the best check on the progress of knowledge," answered Atkins, with a grin.

"Money is even more to be dreaded than knowledge," replied Parkins. "Their superfluous cash must be consumed as soon as possible, for there is nothing so much to be guarded against, as the working men getting capital together. Socialism without money can do us capitalists no harm; but socialism with money, might prove a powerful opponent to the enterprise of individuals, which reaps a harvest from the many for the benefit of the few."

"There is nothing to fear on that score as long as I am their treasurer," replied Atkins, grinning till his two great teeth seemed twice as large as usual.

"No: you are tolerably shrewd," answered

Parkins, "and the state of the law, which renders almost every joint employment of small capital, both difficult and insecure, is greatly in favour of my views. The rich, it appears, with the true spirit of monopoly, have always understood the wisdom and the necessity of keeping the people poor. But to return to our own affairs. At present, the iron factory has an enormous stock on hand, and prices are fearfully low, so that the most advantageous thing that could happen for us, would be a strike. When the wages were lowered, I hoped that would have produced it—but the men, it seems, know better."

"They are very dissatisfied, sir," said the pettifogger.

"Then irritate them further, by spreading a report, that we have got a large order, and are likely to make such enormous profits, that we shall be ready to give them whatever they may demand. Talk about the rights of labour and such stuff—you understand me."

"Trust me, I know my men," returned Atkins.

"There is only one alternative," said Mr. Parkins, "they must either strike, or we must close the works, and as we can live without them better than they can without us, we shall have them afterwards on our own terms, and hear nothing of the conditions Mr. Gerard has been mad enough to accept. Good evening, Mr. Atkins. Don't come to my office—you understand me—drop me a line if you have any questions to ask, or anything of importance to communicate."

So saying, Mr. Parkins turned towards the door. Just at that moment, it was thrown open, and two men entered the room, as if they expected to find it unoccupied. The one was Mathew Fuller, the other, his friend the manager. Mr. Parkins sought to glide past them unobserved; but Fuller's quick eye recognised him in an instant.

There was nothing which delighted the poor

actor more, when he was in good spirits, as he was that evening, than to mortify the old acquaintances who disowned him ; stung by contempt, it was some relief to humiliate those who despised him.

He was nothing daunted, therefore, when Mr. Parkins turned his back upon him, and raising his hat, he said with great civility,

"Good evening, sir, pray don't let me be any restraint upon you. You knew me very well once, when I had the honour of serving my time with you; a good many years ago, Mr. Parkins, and one has gone up, and the other down in the world, since then."

"I really beg your pardon, I have not the honour of recognizing you," said the bland attorney, looking very coolly and sarcastically, from the Spanish hat to the gay shoes of the actor. "I have really seen so many persons, in the course of my profession, that my memory is somewhat treacherous. I am not aware that I have any acquaintance who follows the call-

ing of a mountebank, and I neither remember your person nor your name."

"Don't you, sir?" replied Mathew, with a bitter smile. "Perhaps a day may not be far distant, when you may have cause to remember both."

Then turning to his friend the manager, he spoke a few words to him, and they withdrew together, into another room. Once in this place of temptation, the actor was unable to resist the hospitable offers of his new friend, and with a large glass of brandy-and-water before him, totally forgot his little daughter and the appointment he had made with Edward Mallory. From this oblivion of his duty, he was destined to be most fearfully aroused.

"Did you observe that vagabond?" inquired Parkins, of his companion, Mr. Atkins, as soon as they were left alone.

"Yes! He belongs to the strolling company in the market-place," was the reply.

"You should know him again?"

"Certainly!"

"Then I confide him to your care. He must be got out of the way, on some pretence or other. He may prove a dangerous witness, in the cause of a client of mine. You shall be paid handsomely. You understand me."

"Perfectly! A word to the wise," replied Atkins, laying a finger on one side of his flaming nose, and opening his eyes as greedily as if the reward were already within his grasp.

"Good night to you," said Parkins, and he quitted the house alone, leaving his agent to keep an eye on the movements of Mathew Fuller.

After he had walked a little distance from the Black Bull, he turned down a narrow street, and soon reached the Quay.

CHAPTER IX.

It was already dusk, the evening star was shining bright and clear in the western sky, just over the crimson light which expanded like an angel's wing above the horizon, marking the course of the departed sun; and the broad radiance of the quiet heaven, and the gleam of the pure white solitary star, were alike reflected in the motionless waters of the harbour, where the thin masts and spars of the ships arose in dark relief, like the naked branches of a winter forest. And all was still as midnight, save when the distant hum of voices, or music afar off, betrayed that the town's inhabitants were still awake, and the

haunts of business only deserted, for the pursuit of pleasure in the festivities of the fair.

Mr. Parkins had not proceeded far, amidst this solitude and silence, when he was joined by a tall stout man, whom he immediately recognised to be the seaman, Captain Blake, as he was commonly called.

"You are rather past your time, Mr. Parkins," he said, in a tone of great familiarity.

"I have been unexpectedly detained by that old fool, Sir Thomas Mallory," was the lawyer's reply.

"Ah! d—d amusing company," answered the Captain. "Does the pompous old ass know that his youngest son is in this country again?"

"Are you sure of that?" demanded the lawyer, eagerly.

"As sure as that my name is Richard Blake," answered the Captain. "I went out to America with him, in the same ship, and

though influenced, I suppose, by his father's prejudices against me, he thought proper to disown any connexion with me. I took rather a liking to him, for he is an uncommonly fine-spirited, energetic fellow, without a bit of affectation about him. I met him, to my surprise, about a quarter of an hour ago, coming out of a low theatre in the market-place."

"But surely you told me, some time ago, that he had purchased land in America, and was getting so well on there, that it seemed likely he would remain all his life on the other side of the Atlantic."

"So I did!" said Blake. "But who can answer for a young man's whims. Perhaps he has come to England in search of a wife; I have heard that he was in love before he went away."

"True," replied the lawyer. "He was intimate with Thornton, and Thornton has a remarkably quiet, pretty little daughter."

"But she is bespoke," answered the Captain. "The lad's own brother, Oswald Mallory, has been after her, ever since he was a boy."

"So I have heard," was Parkins's reply, and he spoke with so much indifference, that Blake, who knew him thoroughly, began to suspect that he had some peculiar interest in little Mary Thornton; particularly when he inquired, after a pause, "if the girl gave Mr. Oswald any encouragement."

"I really cannot say, but it is very likely, for he is a good-looking fellow," said the Captain, "but her father tells me he has forbid him the house."

"Indeed!" returned the lawyer "That certainly appears quite against his daughter's interest. But that Thornton, after all, is an old fool; always talking like a philosopher, and acting like an ass. Have you sounded him about the little business we were discussing the other day?"

"Not yet," was the surly answer. "I told you, in fact, positively, I would have nothing to do with it."

"What! Dick Blake shewing the white feather?" said the lawyer, with a low, soft, but most insulting laugh.

"No man living dare insinuate that I am a coward!" cried the seaman, his dark eyes flashing, and his face becoming crimson, though it was invisible in the darkness. "I have fought many an unequal battle, against double the force of my craft, on the broad seas, and I have faced the pirates, both in the east and the west, without flinching, and those who do not scruple at falsehood, have told you I was a smuggler; but I would shoot any man through the head who dared to say so to my face. You quite mistook your man, when you asked me to bribe a Custom-house officer, to shut his eyes, and cheat the Government for your profit."

"But it is your own vessel," said Parkins,

"and, of course, you know, it will be seized, if these goods are found on board."

"Then you must pay for it, that is all," replied the Captain, coolly. "When you engaged my vessel, you never told my agent you intended to freight it with smuggled goods, or that you had any expectations that I would assist you to get them into the country."

"I assure you I don't do it on my own account," answered Parkins. "The cargo belongs to one of our great dealers in this town, who owes me a large sum of money, which I see no other way of getting hold of, but by securing these goods. In fact, I lent five thousands pound towards the venture."

"A very honourable, and a very legal transaction, no doubt," replied Blake, with a sneer.

"I was not aware of the nature of their speculation till it was too late," said the attorney. "It is a disagreeable affair, no doubt;

but I really must endeavour to avoid losing my money altogether. You know Thornton well; and I thought if Thornton would undertake to assist us, the thing could be managed without any difficulty."

"I do know Thornton well," was the reply, "and I would rather lose my vessel, if it must be so, than tempt him to his ruin."

"The man drinks," persisted Parkins; "he is deeply in debt, and I know, to a certainty, that he has ruined himself already—so I have no scruples on that score."

"But I have," answered the Captain. "Thornton is a good fellow, and a sincere friend, though he may have his foibles. He never shook me off, like some better men, when I was in misfortune; and I should be sorry to see him brought into trouble. Cannot you find somebody else to purchase, if you must bribe?"

"No: he is the only man on the establish-

ment who can assist us in this affair," was the reply.

"Then you may manage him yourself," cried Blake, abruptly, "for I swear, I will have nothing to do with such a sneaking business. I was born a gentleman, Mr. Parkins, and though I confess I have been a reckless fellow, and my hot temper got me into the scrape, from which I was expelled from her Majesty's navy, the world has given me a worse name than I deserve; and I never was a mean scoundrel, like some who live on shore, with their pockets full of cash, and buy golden opinions from all sorts of men. Disgrace sunk deeper into my soul than the authors of it supposed; I hated my native land, and I was mad when old friends looked askance at me; so I bought a little schooner, and traded on my own account. Pretty successfully, as you know, Mr. Parkins. The British Government had first declared war against me; it had fixed a

brand of disgrace upon me, not all the waters of the British seas could wash out—so I consider it no reproach to sail under the American flag, and to renounce the protection of British laws, which had not stood between me and ruin; but I am no smuggler, and I will have nothing to do with cowardly, sneaking, underhand bribery. Such work suits you better than me."

"Thank you," answered Parkins, testily. "It appears, then, I have been misinformed. The person who engaged your vessels were led to believe you only sailed under American colours to cheat the British customs, and that you had no objection to a snug venture, in a contraband way."

"One of my ships," said Blake, "was thus misapplied, by a rascally commander, during my absence in China; and this, no doubt, occasioned reports to my prejudice. But I disapprove of the practice, and dismissed the man. So now you know my mind."

"Where do you suppose this vessel of ours to be at present?" demanded Parkins.

"I have had no tidings of her since she left the coast of Spain," replied the Captain. "The winds have been contrary; and though by a lucky chance, she may arrive this week, she may not be heard of for a month."

"I shall be glad when her cargo is landed," rejoined the lawyer. "It is said to be worth ten thousand pounds, and even the half of that is a great risk."

"Yes, it is a round sum, when a cargo cannot be insured," answered the seaman, with a broad laugh. "But that is your look out, Mr. Parkins; if you cannot be content with ordinary interest, when you lend money, well then — you must incur extraordinary risk!"

"The rate of interest is generally so low, and safe investments so difficult to be found," was the reply, "that I preferred trusting a respectable firm, to buying railway shares.

But I fear I made a mistake; and I don't like losing, for you know, Blake, I have a daughter to marry."

"Ah true," replied the Captain. "You are a lucky fellow—you have somebody to work for—somebody to live for—and that is more than I have."

"Yes, my daughter is a fine girl—a devilish fine girl," said the attorney. "I wonder you have never married again, Blake? You are in the prime of life still."

"A little past that," returned the seaman, with a harsh laugh. "But how, in the name of fortune, can I marry, when I cannot prove my first wife's death."

"Is that possible?"

"Nothing is more certain. She and I never lived very happily together, after the first few months. I soon found out she had liked somebody else better, and had only married me, in the impatience of disappointment. Her brother, Sir Thomas Mallory, did all he could, to sow

discord between us; for he had never approved of the match; and, unluckily, it was not difficult. In short, we did not suit; but I am not the first man, whom a pretty face has made a fool of. One day I lost all patience, and went to sea in a passion, without even wishing her good morning. I was soon afterwards brought to a court martial, for insubordination; and, thanks to her brother's evidence, was dismissed the service. As you may suppose, I did not return home. My wife never wrote to me, nor I to her; but at the end of seven or eight months, I received an anonymous letter, informing me that she had died in child-bed—but where, or when, or how, I have never been able to discover."

"And the child?" demanded Parkins, but without looking Blake in the face.

"If there was one," he replied, "it must now be of age, and has a claim on one of Sir Thomas Mallory's estates, for three thousand pounds, secured by his mother's marriage set-

tlement to her grand-children. I rather fancy the Baronet must pay me the money, if there is no child; but I am not quite clear about that, though I have seen a copy of the settlement, in former days."

"I hope you have the paper still," said Parkins, fixing his searching eyes, for the first time, on the face of Blake.

"Not I," replied the Captain. "Nor do I know what has become of it; but, of course, Mr. Parkins, as man of business to the family, the original is in your keeping. I have returned to S—— to enquire about it."

"Then I am sorry to tell you, I know nothing of any such document," was the lawyer's reply. "If a settlement ever existed, which I very much doubt, I think it very likely, it was burnt with other papers, when Stoke Court was on fire, about ten years ago. The flames burst out in the library, and were so quickly extinguished, that it was not generally known in the neighbourhood how

much mischief had been done; but I have heard Sir Thomas lament the loss of certain deeds; and, I have no doubt, this settlement was one of them. I fear your claims are quite hopeless, unless you can produce it."

"I don't care about the money for myself," said the seaman; "but if I had a child, I would have done everything in my power to establish its rights."

"You might have found it difficult to get the money," answered Parkins; "for the Baronet is somewhat short of cash."

"He has houses and broad lands," returned Blake, "and can surely be made to pay a paltry sum like that."

"There may be prior claims," said the attorney, looking up, with a cunning side-glance, of his keen, black eyes.

"Your own, perhaps?" rejoined the Captain, stroking his thick mustachios.

"I have claims certainly," was the cool reply; and then the lawyer quickly changed the

subject, as if this was one on which he did not choose to dilate. "You think the ship can be here this week?" he enquired, standing suddenly still, and turning full on his companion.

"Yes, it is possible it may be here in three days," answered the Captain.

"It is a short time to devise another expedient," was the reply; "but I must speak with the owners of the cargo, and see what other plan can be adopted."

"You had better," said Blake; "but let me recommend you to take care of my ship."

"Oh, yes, certainly," said the lawyer. "Should any misfortune happen, I am, of course, answerable for all losses. In the meantime, Captain Blake, I rely upon your secresy. By the bye, when will you come and dine with me, to taste that Maderia you brought me from India."

"Whenever you please," answered the seaman.

"Oh, any time, is no time—fix a day."

"With your permission, then, I'll name to-morrow."

"To-morrow," echoed Parkins; "I am very sorry, but I am afraid—"

"Oh, you are engaged to-morrow, are you? Then the next day—it is all the same to me."

"The next day—" stammered Parkins.

"What—confound it, you are engaged every day, I suppose. Mrs. Parkins is an old acquaintance of mine, and I hope she has not grown so fine a lady as to be ashamed to receive your clients."

"Oh, dear, no! she will be most happy," returned the attorney, now afraid of having offended the Captain, in whose power, he very well knew, he had placed himself, by a fatal misconception of his character. "I remember now—we are only engaged by company at home the day after to-morrow, so come the day after to-morrow, at seven o'clock. We shall be most happy to see you. Mrs. Parkins and my daughter will be delighted to renew their ac-

quaintance with you. Hark, what was that? surely there was an alarm of fire," he cried, suddenly arresting his steps, and gazing round him.

"Yes, by Jove, the sky is lighted up, and there is a cloud of smoke rising from those houses at the bottom of the Quay. I must be off, and see what is going on."

Blake, in whom the love of adventure was still as powerful an impulse as in his earliest youth, ran off without saying another word, to the scene of the conflagration; whilst Parkins, quietly considering that he had no property in that direction, without troubling himself even to enquire further about the occurrence, returned with great composure to his own home.

CHAPTER X.

When Edward Mallory had wandered about, for nearly half-an-hour after he parted from Captain Blake, in search of Mathew Fuller, he was fully convinced, that the actor had forgotten his engagement; and a good deal annoyed by the trouble this was likely to occasion him, he returned once more to the neighbourhood of the theatre, in quest of him, before he could decide to return home.

The warehouses and offices were all closed; the gas-lights in the shops extinguished; and the people, who had thronged the streets and market-place, where the fair was held, during the day, had all returned to their dwellings in town, or country, or gone to the public-houses, to

indulge in the ruinous habit of drinking, which is, unfortunately, in England, too frequently the termination of public amusements. Scarcely any sound interrupted the tranquillity of all around him, save now and then, the impatient growl of the lion, as he turned in his narrow cage, or the yell of a hungry tiger.

There was to be a moon that night, so with the laudable economy, practised by many country corporations, no lamps were lighted. As the cloudy night approached, there was, therefore, total darkness in the streets, and Mallory, at length, despairing of meeting the actor, decided upon returning to the inn, where he had taken up his temporary abode.

Suddenly a flash of light shot up behind the canvass theatre, and then another, and another, till all the surrounding windows flashed back the blaze, as if a sudden illumination had given a glory, and a brightness to the night.

Mallory, struck with astonishment and consternation, stood still, and gazed upon the

flames; but only for a moment. He felt almost instantly, that it was not a time either for doubt or hesitation, for the humble theatre, where he had recently witnessed Fuller's performance, a miserable erection of wood and canvass, was burning furiously.

He raised the cry of fire, with the utmost power of his strong voice; he ran from door to door of the surrounding houses, knocking to arouse the inhabitants; and when a crowd gathered, in consequence of this alarm, he sent off the men, who had come to his assistance, in quest of the fire engines.

As no one was supposed to be in the theatre, the public interest was most excited for the wild beasts, which were enclosed only a few yards from the conflagration, in a wooden erection; but Mallory pointed out to the people, that there was no cause for immediate alarm on that score, as the wind carried the flames in a different direction.

Scarcely had he uttered these words, when

piercing, though feeble cries for help, were heard from the blazing theatre. Again and again they were repeated, more loud, and shrill, and wild in their expression of despairing agony. Mallory rushed to the door opposite the spot where he stood—it was locked! there was a general clamour in the dense crowd for the key; but to that he gave no heed. Taking a knife from his pocket, he ripped up the canvass from top to bottom, in an instant, and had disappeared into the interior of the building, before the crowd was aware that he had found an entrance.

A pause of awful expectation followed; and so intense was the anxiety of the beholders, so profound the stillness of their terror, that not a whisper was to be heard throughout the dense and rude multitude, then gathered in the market-place; nothing but the wailing cries of the poor, pent up, helpless victim, amidst the flames. But even these quickly ceased.

Then, indeed, the suspense of the spectators

became fearfully agonizing. The flames meanwhile made rapid progress. Soon after the disappearance of Mallory, the side of the theatre, by which he had entered, blazed high and fiercely, and so dense was the smoke, that many of the crowd began to fear, that he might never come forth alive. The heat was now so intense, that none dared approach the building. The beams which formed part of the roof of the pit, at the side where the fire had first burst forth, ere long fell in, with a tremendous crash, sending a perfect volcano of glowing fragments, and sparks, high into the gloomy air. There was a momentary lull in the roaring and rushing speed of the conflagration, and then away it burst again, the flames shooting up, as if rejoicing in their triumph, far higher than the surrounding houses.

All now gave the stranger up for lost, when suddenly his tall figure was seen, rushing from a cloud of smoke, bearing a child in his arms, whose head rested, as if lifeless, on his shoulder.

Those who had witnessed the performances in the theatre, during the past week, at once recognized the little dancing girl; the pretty creature, whose innocent beauty, had won both love and pity.

Then did the genuine, honest sympathy of humble English hearts burst forth in all its beauty, and its truth, and one loud, and general hurrah of exultation rent the air. Edward rushed on with his burthen, beyond the circle of intense heat around the fire, before he paused, even for an instant.

Then, as if exhausted, he stopped, and looked around him, either in search of assistance, or in order to collect his ideas, as to what was expedient next to be done. It might be, that he was overpowered by the rush of his own feelings, for his exultation at having saved the life of a fellow creature was very great, and the blood rushed so rapidly to his heart, that he tottered and almost fell to the ground, more exhausted by the excess of his emotion,

than the exertion and the danger he had overcome.

He was at that instant addressed by a gentleman, no longer young, but of a most prepossessing appearance.

"If you are able to follow me, sir," he said, "come only a few steps further, and you shall have prompt assistance, both for yourself and the little creature you have saved."

Mallory made no reply, but eager to escape from the crowd now pressing densely around him, he silently followed his unknown conductor, who, with a voice of authority, made way for him to pass.

They had, in truth, only a short distance to go, after they had turned out of the market-place into a narrow, quiet street, leading to the upper cliff. After making one or two turnings, the gentleman stopped at the door of a mean house, and knocked for admission.

The night was too dark, and Edward was indeed too much confused, to observe the place

accurately; he was, therefore, most agreeably surprised, when his old nurse, Mrs. West, opened the cottage door.

"I have brought you a lodger," said the stranger to the old woman, before she had time to express her astonishment, or could recognize Edward Mallory, whose face was completely blackened by the smoke of the burning theatre. "This poor young girl has been saved from the fire in the market-place, and must be laid on your bed upstairs, and properly attended to, till surgical aid can be procured. Light us up, at once."

The old woman, who knew the stranger well, begged him to come in, and then obeyed him without asking any farther explanation.

Edward Mallory did not utter a word, but he followed Mrs. West to the little room, on the upper story, and laid his insensible burthen tenderly on the bed. He then bent anxiously over her, to investigate the extent of the injuries she had received. At one time the child

had remained so perfectly motionless, and so heavy in his arms, that he feared she had for ever ceased to breathe; but when he held the old woman's candle close to her face, and felt the pulse in her slender wrist, he was convinced that she had only fainted, and was already slowly reviving. One of her small hands, with which she had probably extinguished the fire, which had consumed a part of her spangled dress, was much burnt; but other visible injury, she had none.

Mallory, the moment he had descried her on entering the theatre, had wrapped her in a piece of old carpet he found lying on the ground, and which had previously been her bed; and thus envelloped, she had escaped all further injury from the flames. Fortunately, the nook where she had lain down to rest, was remote from the part where the flames first burst forth, and was the very last part of the theatre, which, after her rescue, became a prey to the flames.

Edward was still bending over the insensible

form of Lilly, and the stranger was directing their hostess to send some one quickly in quest of the nearest surgeon, when there was a rushing of many feet, and a confused sound of voices in the street below. The crowd evidently stopped in front of the cottage.

"This is the house," was audibly exclaimed by a rough male voice.

"I saw them go in here," cried another.

"There is a light up stairs," shouted a third, and much more was said by many speakers at once, though the confusion of voices was so great as to render their words incomprehensible to the party in Mrs. West's bed-room.

Before they could inquire or conjecture the cause of this disturbance, the door was thrown open, and Mathew Fuller, still in his stage dress, but without either hat or cloak, rushed into the room. The poor player had all the appearance of the wildest insanity.

"My child! My child!" he exclaimed, "whether dead or alive, only let me see my

child once more," and without noticing any one in the room, he fell on his knees beside the bed, and covered the little girl's face with kisses.

"She is warm—she breathes! Oh, thank God I am not her murderer!" were the words which burst from his lips, when he felt her breath upon his cheek; and then he hid his face in the bed clothes, and wept wildly and convulsively.

Both the stranger and Edward Mallory forbore to interrupt this natural burst of agony, for they wisely judged that the future sanity of the wretched father's overwrought brain, probably depended on its free indulgence. They little knew what bitter cause he had to reproach himself, for being the cause of little Lilly's danger. Had she died, the pangs of conscience would have made it impossible for him to have survived her loss.

"You are ill, sir," said the stranger, in a low voice to Edward, who had sunk, over-

powered, on a chair. "It would be advisable for you to proceed, without further delay, to a place where you can be better attended to than here. I shall be happy to accompany you, if you want assistance, wherever you desire to go, for allow me to add, your noble conduct this night is beyond all praise. But it needs it not, for verily the spectacle before you must be a noble reward, to a benevolent and generous heart."

"I thank you for your kind consideration, but I have suffered only slightly," replied Edward, in the same low tone, as that in which the stranger had addressed him, but still the words were heard by Fuller.

"Whose voice is that?" he cried springing suddenly from his knees. "Who says that Mr. Edward Mallory was the saviour of my child—my Lilly—my only treasure upon earth? I see you now—I know you, even thus—it is Mr. Edward—it is the only friend

who did not cast me off in my misfortunes, and my poverty ; and he has rescued my child from the flames, at the risk of his own life, whilst I, in my folly, and my wickedness, had left her to perish. Oh, this is too much—too much !"

And the actor checking the first impulse of feeling, which prompted him to clasp his benefactor to his heart, knelt down and kissed his hand with reverential gratitude.

The stranger, whilst this passed, fixed a keen and searching glance on the young man, and listened to the words of Fuller, with profound interest and curiosity.

The little girl revived almost at the moment, when the surgeon, who had been sent for, entered the room, and raising her head from her pillow, she gazed around her, with a bewildered look, unable to comprehend what she heard and saw, and still believing that she was waiting in the deserted theatre.

"Oh, father—father, will you never come! Oh, father, save me—save me!" were the first words she uttered.

"My child, my Lilly, my own sweet darling, forgive me," murmured the player, as he again sunk on his knees beside her. "Your father is with you, my own Lilly, and never, never, will he leave you more."

"I am glad you are come back, very glad," said the little creature, "for my hands are very sore; and those terrible flames; oh, father, father, we shall be burnt."

"No, no, my child, there is no danger now," answered Fuller, whose heart was agonized by every word she uttered, more than if a knife had pierced it.

"Are we safe—quite safe? Oh, I am so glad," continued the child. "Don't leave me there again, father. I don't like being alone in that place, in the dark, when the wild beasts are so near—and then the flames, the terrible flames! I thought when I found the door

was locked, that I should never see you again, and then I called as loud as I could, but nobody answered, and I burnt my hand terribly, for my frock caught fire. How did I get out, father—did you hear me call ?"

"No, my child," was Fuller's reply, and the blush of shame mantled to his brow, as he uttered the words. "I was too far off, but this gentleman rushed through the flames to save you."

"Did he ?" said Lilly, looking curiously at Edward. "Oh, yes, I remember now. A tall gentleman came, and took me so gently in his arms, and told me so kindly—so very kindly, not to be frightened. I thought that God had sent him, and then I knew nothing more after that—not even how we came here. Did the gentleman carry me all the way, father ?"

"Yes, Lilly, he risked his own life to save you ;" replied the player, and the agony of his heart was beyond expression, when he remembered the manner in which he had been en-

gaged, at that terrible time, when his child was on the point of perishing in consequence of his neglect. It was the bitterest pang he had ever felt, in the whole course of his wayward life, though remorse in his vacillating heart, had ever promptly followed all derelictions from duty.

Stunned and bewildered by his shame, and his sorrow, he watched Mrs. West, under the surgeon's directions, applying remedies to Lilly's hands, scarcely conscious of what was going on; but the little girl, feeling her pain alleviated, began to look around her, and her eyes resting on Edward Mallory, she surveyed him earnestly for a brief space, and then suddenly exclaimed—

"Oh, father, there is the gentleman who came to me in the fire—he is smiling at me, just as he did then—bring him to me, and let me thank him very, very much."

And the little creature's eyes sparkled with delight at recognizing her deliverer.

Edward approached her with a pleasure that greatly encreased by the discovery, that she was the child of poor Mathew Fuller.

The surgeon now interfered, and saying that his little patient was more likely to suffer from over-excitement, than from the slight burns she had received, commanded every one to leave the room, except her father and Mrs. West.

Edward Mallory, most desirous of escaping all further observation, or recognition, in his present state, withdrew from the chamber, the moment he heard this announcement. The stranger followed him to the room below.

"Allow me, sir," he said, addressing him as he was about to leave the house, "to ask where I may have the honour of calling on you, to-morrow, to express to you, in a stronger and more worthy manner, than it has been in my power to do to-night, my high admiration of your gallant conduct. I shall be glad also to consult with you, as to what course it may be advisable to take to secure the future welfare

of this poor Fuller and his child, and to rescue them from their present disreputable pursuit."

"I am to be found at the George Inn, between nine and ten o'clock, where I shall be happy to be honoured by your company," replied Edward. "May I, in my turn, enquire to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?"

"That card will inform you," replied the stranger, and he took one from his pocket, and put it into Edward's hand. "My name is probably not quite unknown to you, although we have never met since you were very young. Good night, Mr. Edward Mallory; I will not longer detain you from paying that attention to yourself, of which, I feel certain, you must stand in need."

Edward bowed in silence, and they then parted, each returning to his home.

CHAPTER XI.

When Edward Mallory regained his Inn, it was near midnight; yet he found its inmates all astir, and numerous questions were put to him, and many congratulations offered by the throng, who gathered round him in the passage. Although blackened by the smoke, through which he had passed, he had fortunately received no serious injury from the flames; and such was the excitement of his mind, that he was not aware, till he reached his chamber, that his hair and face were scorched and blistered.

The landlady supplied him with such slight remedies as the case required; and overcome by the great fatigue he had undergone, he

closed his door against all intruders, and flung himself on his bed to rest, if not to sleep.

Though he had heard much during the preceding day concerning his family affairs, which had pained and grieved him deeply, yet, when his head rested on the pillow, he enjoyed a feeling of contentment—nay, even of exultation, such as the most successful intriguer, for mere selfish interest, never yet experienced.

He had saved the life of an innocent and helpless human being—he had rescued the only child of a loving, though an erring father, from a horrible death, and the shout, with which the multitude had welcomed his reappearance from the theatre, and the joyful thanks of the poor actor, were sounds which thrilled again and again, unbidden, on his ears, and mingling with his dreams, made him start from his light sleep, and gaze around, for a moment, bewildered and confused. Then, conscious that the danger, which had been real,

was past, and the child in safety, he again dropt into a quiet slumber, till, at length, his weary spirit found deep repose, and he forgot, even in his dreams, all recent events, till the high sun shone brightly into his chamber on the morrow.

He had already breakfasted when the clock struck ten. This first recalled the stranger to his mind, who had conducted him from the crowd, and whose card, he had totally forgotten to look at, in the hurry of the preceding evening. Yet, even in the agitation of their brief acquaintance, this man had made a most favourable impression on his mind. There was a calm decision in his manner, which gave Mallory the idea, that he was a person of some importance, and of very superior intellect.

He was highly delighted, therefore, when he found the stranger's card, to read on it the name of Gerard.

To this gentleman he had brought letters of

credit and recommendation from his banker in America, and though he had not yet, since his arrival in S——, found time to present them, he rejoiced that accident had so speedily brought him in contact with the man whom he had most ardently desired to know.

Mr. Gerard was a philanthropist, a liberal, and a philosopher; no passionate and headlong reformer, but a thoroughly practical man of business.

All this, Edward Mallory had heard of him, and was well aware that he was no common character. Taught in the school of adversity to estimate the real value of men, independently of the false distinctions, with which social rank, and the possession of wealth invests them, he looked forward, with pleasure, to an acquaintance with a highly gifted man, whose sentiments, he had been led to believe, would, on many subjects, harmonize with his own.

Edward Mallory was, in truth, by nature,

so ardent and imaginative, that his enthusiasm for all those principles, which cooler heads often regard as the delusions of youth, was, in spite of his early trials and disappointments, as fervent as it had ever been. He still believed, with confidence and hope, in the possibility of his fellow creatures being trained by education, when emancipated from the paralizing interference of churchmen, to a capability of wisely exercising the privilege of self-government. Liberty, knowledge, and the rights of labour, were still words of power and significance to him.

But the freedom he desired, was not the partial liberty, which secures to thousands the enjoyment of the produce of the labour of the needy, and the profits of capital, whilst millions can scarcely earn existence by their ceaseless toil, and see their children growing up, as ignorant and neglected as themselves, amidst all the glories of wealth and knowledge, in daily increasing animosity against their su-

periors, both clerical and laymen, who teach them little, but the sinfulness of the low indulgences, which constitute the only pleasures of their undisciplined and ignorant minds.

The liberty he dreamt of, was based on the widest principles; on secular education, accessible alike to rich and poor of every creed, and on a pure representative government; a liberty now existing in some of the most highly civilized of the Swiss Cantons, but which the vast influence of accumulated wealth, will probably for ever render impossible in England. Though for his age, he had seen much of the world, and his knowledge had not been limited to one country, or one class, like that of many politicians, he had yet to learn more of mankind, and the inequalities of their endowments, and their accidental training, before his youthful enthusiasm was sufficiently sobered, to believe, that there is no perfection to be attained on earth, either by individuals, or by governments.

But youth's persuasion of the perfectibility of the human race, is a beautiful—almost a sacred delusion, which noble natures are eager to retain, and bitterly lament, when dispelled by the hard truths of social experience. It is the dew and freshness of a beautiful dawn, which when once evaporated in the noontide of life, never more returns. How much of trust, and love, and hope, must be torn away and withered, before that cheerless hour arrives!

On requesting the waiter to direct him to the house of Mr. Gerard, Edward heard with surprise, that the gentleman had called on him, half-an-hour before he came down stairs, but would not allow him to be disturbed.

"He left his card, sir," said the man, "and desired me to tell you, he should be delighted to see you at his house, as he should be unable to call again on you, to-day."

To the residence of Mr. Gerard, therefore, Mallory determined to proceed, without delay,

and from thence to Mrs. West's cottage, to enquire after Fuller and his child.

As he pursued his way towards the house of the merchant, many misgivings crossed his mind, as to this man's real character, and he dreaded, lest in spite of all his anticipations, he should find him to be only one of those fine calculators, who understand how to turn the better feelings of mankind to their account, and prefer to govern thus, instead of exciting the evil passions of the populace. He felt that he had hitherto seen so little genuine disinterested philanthropy in the world, that he sometimes doubted its existence; yet, eager to think well of human nature, he was impatient to become better acquainted with the man, whose character, he had been led to suppose, was an exception to all general rules.

The merchant's house, where he speedily arrived, was in the busiest part of the town. The pride of station, or of newly acquired wealth, had not induced him to make the badness of

the air, a pretext for ceasing to reside amidst the people, by whose assistance his wealth had been acquired.

Mr. Gerard lived in a square, brick house, probably, built in the reign of George the First, in a quiet street, not far from the Quay. But though old, it was not neglected like that of Mr. Parkins, but in excellent repair, externally, and had all the advantages of comfortable arrangement and tasteful decoration within.

Edward was astonished by the beauty of the stuccoed hall and staircase, adorned with casts from the antique, and pots of flowering plants. A neat female servant conducted him into a small room, on the first floor, simply furnished, but partaking of the same good taste, which pervaded the rest of the house. There was no luxury, no ostentation, but much beauty and harmony of colour, form, and arrangement. Every thing showed, that Mr. Gerard esteemed simplicity to be the highest point of refine-

ment. As Mallory looked round, at the plain book-cases, full of choice books, the well-chosen bronzes, and two beautiful pictures by Landseer and Stanfield, his curiosity and interest in Mr. Gerard, were more than ever excited.

When the master of the house, at length, entered the room, and Edward saw him distinctly in the broad light of day, he felt he was a man not only to be respected, but beloved; and he, at once, ceased to doubt, that benevolence and philanthropy, were the impulses which had made him the friend of the people, and the political opponent of Mr. Parkins and Sir Thomas Mallory. Mr. Gerard received him with extreme cordiality.

"I am delighted," he said, "that the letter of my old friend in New York, of which you are the bearer, has insured me your acquaintance, Mr. Mallory, and now affords me an opportunity of expressing to you my high

admiration of your conduct last night. It is by such actions, that a true estimate can be formed of a man's heart, for they are the result of a natural impulse, and not the consequence of any cold-blooded calculation of self-interest, which some pretend to be the origin of all virtue."

"I am happy to have so easily gained your good opinion," he replied; "for I am well aware how much it is worth possessing."

"I rejoice to learn that the poor actor's child, whom you so gallantly saved, has not suffered any material injury," said the merchant, with a pleasant smile.

"I shall visit her when I leave you," answered Edward. "I knew Fuller when I was a boy—he was then in Mr. Parkins' the attorney's office; but he liked what is called pleasure, better than work, and fell step by step, till he is now a broken-hearted outcast from society."

"I grieve to say, there are many such in this rich and glorious country," said Mr. Gerard; "men well born, and what is called, well-bred, who, wanting moral energy to fight honestly the great battle of society, sink to be the beggars and vagrants of the camp. False education, which is in fact, worse than no education at all, the want of guiding friends, and strong principles, with early idleness, the root of every evil, are the causes of their ruin. And these causes it is almost impossible, under any circumstances, to remove. But still, though we may blame the weakness and the vices of such men, they cannot be left to starve."

"I perfectly agree with you," was Edward's rejoinder, "and though Fuller himself deserves blame, his little daughter is innocent, and must be rescued from her disgraceful profession, before her ruin is complete. I saw her last night on the stage, and my heart bled for her, though I knew not then that she was

Fuller's child. There was little merit in her performance ; but her childish innocence, and pretty manner, were so touching, that she was rewarded with shouts of applause."

"Ah!" said Mr. Gerard, with glistening eyes, "the people have just and feeling hearts, when they are appealed to with love ; when their better nature is addressed, and not those base passions, to which villains pander, for their own vile purposes of profit and ambition."

"But it is seldom that the lower ranks are estimated higher than as wheels in a great political machine," said Mallory.

"To cultivate the noble and generous feelings, which God has implanted in the heart of man, in every station—to elevate the moral as well as the physical existence of the most neglected of my fellow creatures—to direct their passions as well as their intellect aright, has long been the principal object of my life," returned the merchant, his eyes flashing, and his

whole coutenance bright with animation. "I have laboured hard—I have met with many obstacles—I have been misrepresented, belied, and opposed by all those of narrow minds, who regard morality and religion only as engines to keep the populace in subjection, and carry on the masked farce of social propriety for their own advantage; but I am not to be daunted, I am not to be arrested in my course, by the taunts of hypocrites, or fools, nor even by the scoffs of good men, who understand me not. Praised, or blamed, successful or unsuccessful, I will labour as long as strength is given me, to extend and elevate the knowledge of the working classes—to emancipate them from that vulgar and half savage recklessness, which is the unfailing companion of the ignorance of a town mob. By teaching the poor to respect themselves, and their own nature, they can alone be brought to respect the just laws of God and man, with the observance of which all human happiness and prosperity are indis-

solubly united. Such are my principles, Mr. Mallory. I have explained them to you, perhaps, a little prematurely; but you have inspired me with confidence, and there are expressions in my friend's letter which induce me to believe that there is a similarity in our principles, and objects of pursuit."

"In your feelings and aspirations, I am proud to say, I sympathise," replied the young man; "but I regret that my power to benefit my fellow creatures has hitherto been very limited."

"Allow me to say," answered Mr. Gerard, "that I have heard much in your praise, Mr. Mallory. You left England, I believe, about four years ago, in consequence of having refused to enter the church, and accept a good family living?"

"Yes, I did so, and thus incurred my father's displeasure," replied Edward, simply; "but I trust you do not suppose that I was actuated by any contempt for religion. This was not

the case; but I felt, that my spirit was too ardent, too untamed, too restless and inquiring, to be its minister. I, who longed to explore the whole world, and knew that my own heart and mind were only half developed, was little calculated to become the teacher of others. My father did not understand my scruples, treated me as a madman, and a rebel against established duties and proprieties, and cast me off. I have, since then, been pushing my own fortunes in America. But I had left some behind me, whom I could not forget, and was on my way hither, when I received a letter on certain family affairs, which made me hasten my journey."

"May I venture to ask, if this letter related in any way to your father's embarrassments," said Mr. Gerard, with some hesitation of manner.

"Have they, then, become so glaring as to be known to the whole neighbourhood?" enquired the young man, blushing deeply.

"I grieve to say, it is no longer a secret, that Sir Thomas Mallory's estates are mortgaged nearly to their full value," was the reply. "Your elder brother, whose extravagance has hastened this ruin, is said to have had recourse to every possible means, in order to raise money."

"I have already heard something of this sad story since my arrival here," said Edward, "and it is, as you may well suppose, a source of acute pain and mortification, particularly as I have no power to impede my father's ruin. More than ten times the amount of my hard earned savings could not extricate him from his embarrassments; and I have laboured with the hope of making a virtuous woman happy, and securing myself a position in society as a citizen, and a married man."

"You are right," answered Gerard, warmly. "I am single myself, but I confess not by my own will, and I advise all young men, who are not drones in the hive, to marry early.

When they do so, on right principles, it gives exercise to the best affections of our nature, and by the interchange of the daily charities of domestic life, prevents the growth of selfishness. Your friend, Mathew Fuller, would have been a worse man, had his heart not been purified by the love he bears his child. But we must now consider, what can be done for that poor little girl."

"Is Fuller still at Mrs. West's?" inquired Edward.

"I saw him there, this morning, but he talked of returning to his lodgings, which I found, on enquiry, is in one of the vilest parts of the town. The child's burns, though slight, are sufficient to set her free from any engagement with the manager of the theatre."

"She is perfectly safe and comfortable, under Mrs. West's care, for the present," replied Mallory. "The good old woman was my nurse."

"Yes," answered Mr. Gerard; "but it is no place for her to remain in, for long, and we must consult, at another opportunity, about some plan for her education. At present, Mr. Mallory, I am grieved to say, that my time is no longer at my own disposal, but I shall be glad if you would call on me again to morrow morning, for I have a great desire to talk further with you, on certain affairs connected with your own family. Our acquaintance is very brief, Mr. Edward—between your father and myself, there has been a long estrangement, but I must confess to you, that I once took a very great interest in one of your nearest relatives. That lady has been long in the grave, but I do not lightly forget old friends; and for her sake, if you will permit me, I shall presume to busy myself in your affairs, somewhat more than our acquaintance may seem to authorise."

Mr. Gerard smiled, as he pronounced the

last words, but even the smile could not dispel the expression of deep sorrow, which had previously clouded his brow.

"I am most grateful for the kind interest you take in my fortunes, to whatever cause I am indebted for it," returned Edward.

"And you will excuse any liberty I may take—any questions I may ask—any advice I may give?" asked Mr. Gerard, anxiously.

"I can consider nothing a liberty, which is dictated by kindness," was the reply.

"Then allow me to say," returned the merchant, "that a short time before the fire broke out at the theatre, I saw you in close conversation with a man who bears a very doubtful character in this place. I observed you as a stranger, and it struck me then that you listened very unwillingly to his discourse. I hope it was so. You must excuse me, for I know this Mr. Blake married your father's sister, but he is a turbulent fellow, who was

dismissed from the navy, and has since set the world at defiance."

"To a certain extent, I am aware of this," replied Edward, "and I have told him more than once, that I wish to have no intercourse with him. But wherever we meet, he persists in addressing me. We were, unfortunately, passengers together, on board the same ship, to America; but I had already heard so much of his character, from my father, that I avoided him, as much as possible."

"You were right," answered Mr. Gerard, with unusual agitation. "Your father regards him with the most inveterate aversion, and if he heard that you had become intimate with him, all hopes of reconciliation with him would be forever at an end; nay, if you even wish to maintain your own character for respectability, you must avoid him. Your aunt was miserable as his wife, and after they had been married two years, he deserted her, and left her to

die of a broken heart. The stories which have since reached England, of his subsequent career, are such that all men, who respect themselves, avoid his company. Young men at your age, Mr. Edward, especially when estranged from their family, are estimated as much by the society they keep, as by their own conduct."

"I perfectly agree with you," answered Mallory, "but though I have studiously avoided the company of Blake, I have heard nothing in America, to his disadvantage. Many speak of him there as a daring, dashing, resolute sailor, with a rough temper but an honest heart."

"Here, on the contrary, he is considered to be a desperate adventurer," said Gerard, "who has renounced the English flag, that he may set the laws at defiance. He has not been seen in this neighbourhood for more than five years, and it is naturally conjectured, that he is connected with the wholesale smuggling

transactions, which have recently been going on. Let me implore you, therefore, to hold no further communication with him, for very keen eyes are watching his proceedings, and you have enemies, who would gladly seize the slightest occasion to involve you in the suspicions, which attach to him."

"You startle me, Mr. Gerard! I was not aware that I had ever made an enemy in the world," said the young man, in an agitated voice.

"It is as frequently the wrongs which men have done us, which make them our enemies, as any injury we have inflicted on them," answered the merchant, gravely. "It is my greatest source of happiness, Mr. Mallory, to believe that virtue is innate in man; but I am no visionary; I know that envy, hatred, and malice, are the vices of human hearts; whether from a defect of nature, or the corruption of society, it is now no time to discuss; but we do wrong not to guard against them. Aye—

though it sounds cruel to say so, we must guard against them, in our nearest relatives—for the nearer the ties of consanguinity, the more do interests clash. Our love of primogeniture most sadly foster all these evil feelings."

"I must confess to you," replied Edward, "that I received a letter whilst in London, intimating that a very serious fraud had been perpetrated to my disadvantage. To investigate this mystery is one of the objects which induced me to return hither."

"Should you have need of advice, or assistance, in the course of this inquiry," returned Mr. Gerard, "I trust you will not scruple to apply to me. I am an old man of business, and can, perhaps be of service to you, more especially, as I am, probably, better acquainted with the characters of the persons with whom you may have to deal, than you can possibly be after such a long absence. I shall feel happy to see you, at all times."

Mallory now arose, and an intimation being

given that some one was waiting to speak with Mr. Gerard, in his office; the young man apologized for having so long occupied his valuable time, and then took his leave.

CHAPTER XII.

When Edward Mallory left the house of Mr. Gerard, he proceeded at once to the more humble dwelling of Mr. Thornton; for he was impatient to see the pretty daughter of the Custom-house Officer, once more, and to excuse himself for having failed in his engagement the previous evening. But he found that both the young lady and her father were from home.

Edward saw something extraordinary in the expression of the maid Nelly's face, as she gave him this answer, and then looking very earnestly at him, she said, abruptly—

"You are not living with your father, at Stoke Court, I believe, sir?"

"No, Nelly—what then?" demanded the gentleman, with some surprise.

"Then you probably don't know, sir," she quickly returned, "that your brother, Mr. Oswald, has been here this morning, already. He was very angry when I told him that Miss Mary was not at home, and would go into the parlour, for he said he did not believe me. At last, when he found that he must go away, he swore he would find her, wherever she might be. Master has forbid him the house twice, sir, and Miss Mary hates the very sight of him, but he is so obstinate, she is tormented to death with him."

"Do you think he is likely to find her, this morning?" inquired Edward, with great anxiety.

"I cannot say, sir," said Nelly. "She did not tell me where she was going. Mr. Oswald I found had heard of your arrival, and he asked me, in a careless kind of way, whether you had been here or not; but I told him I was no

spy on my master's visitors. I am sure, sir, Miss Mary will be very sorry that she was from home when you called."

"Do you think so, Nelly?" demanded the gentleman, looking up with a very pleasant smile, in the face of the open hearted buxom servant.

"To be sure I do," she replied. "Mr. Thornton and Captain Sayers were quite disappointed you did not come last night, and wondered what engagement you could have had, to prevent you. Miss Thornton said little, as you may suppose, Mr. Edward, but she was very dull till the fire disturbed them all, and when Frank Bernard, a friend of mine, came and told how you had saved a child out of the flames, Miss Thornton could not rest, till I sent him down to the George inn, to inquire after you."

"I never heard that he had been there," said the young man, smiling, well pleased at this intelligence.

"Very likely, sir," answered Nelly, blushing. "The people at the George paid no attention to such a one as Frank, for he is only a working man; but he is a true friend of mine, and will do anything for Miss Mary."

"And for you, too, Nelly, no doubt," returned Edward, archly.

The girl laughed, and blushed deeper than before.

"Tell Mr. Thornton," continued the gentleman, "that I will return this evening, if he is likely to be at home."

"He is sure to be at home, sir, and Miss Mary too," answered Nelly; and Edward, then wishing her good morning, turned away.

He walked on, unconsciously, with extreme rapidity, for his mind was occupied with many crowding and anxious thoughts. All he had heard since his return to S—— increased his uneasiness as to his father's position, and intimations had been given him, which made him apprehensive, that his extravagance and unjust

conduct towards himself were not the only reprehensible parts of his conduct.

There cannot be a greater agony to a sensitive mind, than the discovery of a parent's vice, or criminality. Edward could not love his father; yet he shrunk with pain from the bare suspicion of his being unworthy of respect.

His brother's pursuit of Mary Thornton, also, greatly distressed him. He had long dreaded it; and though he was convinced, by all he had recently heard, that he had no cause for jealousy—he felt that his rivalry in love with Oswald must aggravate the hatred which his brother had long borne him, and, by adding to their causes of dissension, destroy all hope of future reconciliation.

Though his spirit was buoyant and sanguine, though with the strong energy of youth and health, and an active temperament, he commonly struggled manfully with the difficulties

of life, without brooding morbidly over the peculiarities of his position; he was deeply sensible of the unkindness of his relatives. He strove to forget it—he endeavoured to forgive it; but his loneliness amidst a busy world, where all others seemed to be linked by social or domestic ties, frequently, in spite of all his efforts to banish the remembrance of the past, recalled the injustice, with which he had been treated to his mind.

Nelly's information concerning his brother had, that day, more than usually depressed his spirits. Though his footsteps were rapid, his heart was heavy with a presentiment of evil; he dreaded that unforeseen obstacles might arise to prevent the accomplishment of his long cherished hope of making Mary Thornton his wife. He feared lest mistrust and sorrow might come between them, and divide him from the only heart, whose love he thought worth possessing, and deprive him of the bright hopes

and pleasant dreams of future happiness, which had hitherto been his solace in every trial, and solitary struggle with adversity.

From such a melancholy train of thought he was aroused by a sudden clamour and confusion at the further end of the street he traversed. He looked up, and saw a crowd of women and children, and a few workmen; but he was at too great a distance to understand the cause of the agitation, which evidently prevailed amongst them.

All that he could learn from a man lounging at a shop door, was, that the police had taking some one into custody, and was leading him away for examination at the office. As Edward advanced, the people moved away, and the crowd had all disappeared round the corner of a neighbouring street, before he reached the door of Mrs. West's cottage, near which he had first seen it.

Without thinking any more of a circumstance of common occurrence in large towns, he

entered the old woman's kitchen. To his inexpressible astonishment, the first object he there beheld, was Mary Thornton, sitting near the window, and bending, with looks of compassion, over little Lilly Fuller, who, kneeling on the ground, hid her face in the lady's lap. The child was weeping violently.

"Oh, Mr. Edward!" exclaimed Mary, the moment she saw him, "I am so glad you are come."

"Has any new misfortune happened?" was Mallory's anxious enquiry.

Lilly knew his voice; but she was so overcome with grief, that she did not look up; she only murmured—

"Father—father—dear father—I shall never see him more."

"Poor child," said the lady, kindly, "don't grieve so bitterly. Your father will soon come back to you, I feel sure he will, and I will take care of you till then."

"But nobody loves me as father does,"

sobbed the child, "and they will kill—I am sure they will kill him, they spoke so crossly to him," and she sobbed more violently than before.

Edward listened in amazement.

"My dear Miss Thornton," he said, "I am astonished, beyond measure, to find you here. I was not aware that these poor people were known to you."

"The story of your gallant conduct, Mr. Edward, is known to the whole town," replied the girl, blushing deeply, and raising her eyes to Edward's, with an expression of heartfelt admiration, which spoke her feelings even more than her words. "Mrs. West, you know, is an old acquaintance of mine," she added, "and my father sent me down the first thing after breakfast, to see if we could be of use in any way to Fuller and his child."

"Always compassionate and generous, as in former days," murmured the young man,

gazing on the blushing girl with looks of the fondest affection.

"And it was well I did come," continued Mary, without appearing to have heard these words, "for two policemen have just been here, to arrest this poor child's father."

"What! to arrest Mathew Fuller!" exclaimed Edward, in amazement.

"Yes. He is a stage-player," said the lady, "and the manager of the temporary theatre, where he performed, accuses him of having wilfully set fire to the building, in order to get free from his engagement to him, and thus to take advantage of a more lucrative offer from the director of another strolling company. They have taken him now before a magistrate."

"The charge appears utterly ridiculous," replied Mallory, quickly. "It was impossible for him to set fire to a place, which, to my certain knowledge, he left more than an hour before the flames burst forth."

"Oh, yes, sir, that is true," cried Lilly, looking eagerly up. "Father went away before the play was over, and he told me he would soon come back; but he never did. The players were all there after he went away, and I never saw him again till he came here. Can't you tell them so, sir? do tell them to let father come to me."

"Fuller says, he spent the time of his absence at the Black Bull," rejoined Miss Thornton, "and that he was still there when some one brought the tidings that the theatre was in flames."

"If all this is true, we shall certainly be able to find witnesses to prove it," answered Mallory, "and I hope there is no doubt, that he will be at once released."

But even this assurance could not comfort little Lilly. Old Mrs. West had followed Fuller to the police-office, in order to learn, as soon as possible, the result of his examination; and neither Edward nor Mary could,

therefore, think of leaving the child, till she returned with tidings of the child's father, and even, perhaps, with poor Fuller himself.

Though they were deeply interested in the fate of the poor actor and his child, they both rejoiced, that a strange chance had brought them thus together, under circumstances, which at once destroyed all ceremony between them, and left them free to renew their intimacy of former years, with frankness and sincerity, unrestrained by the presence of a third person, and free from the forms of society.

Conscious that the wishes of long years were, at length, fulfilled, by their reunion, and the constancy of their mutual attachment, although they did not speak of love, they felt more than words could have expressed, how true and deep had been their long affection, and that it had been strengthened, not diminished by absence.

Warmly and eloquently did Edward describe the flowery meadows and fertile hills of the

country where he had established a home for the future, and though he did not then tell Mary, that he hoped, ere long, to conduct her thither, and make her the mistress of all he had earned with indefatigable toil for her, and her alone, she understood him well; and she smiled on him with such confiding love as she listened to his narrative, that he never doubted she would consent to be his companion, when, for the second time, he left his native land to cross the waters of the Atlantic.

Even little Lilly, at times, forgot her sorrow, as she listened to their pleasant discourse, and the child had neither fear nor diffidence in their presence. Genuine goodness and beauty, at once command the confidence of children, who, as if by intuition, know their real friends.

Yet so different was the interchange of thought in its purity and its beauty, between two cultivated minds, from the rude language

of the players, and the low persons with whom her father's position had hitherto brought her in contract, that Lilly sometimes looked from one to the other in amazement, yet with a confused feeling of sympathy and admiration, such as she had never before experienced. Her young heart, yet uncorrupted, felt the charm of refinement and genuine feeling.

The presence of the little girl, instead of being a restraint on Mary Thornton, seemed rather to give her courage, and to relieve her from the uneasiness she would have felt, had she been entirely alone with Edward in the cottage. She frankly confessed to him, how much pain the persevering addresses of his brother had occasioned her, and her apprehension, at one time, lest her father might insist on her giving him encouragement. But Mr. Gerard, she said, had fortunately interfered, and having ascertained that she really disliked Oswald, and would be miserable, if she were

compelled to permit his addresses, he had insisted on her father forbidding him to come to his house.

"You know Mr. Gerard, then?" enquired Edward, with intense interest.

"Oh, yes," replied the girl; "he has told me often, he was my mother's friend, and, for her sake, could not bear to see me sacrificed to a gay and dissipated man of fashion like Mr. Oswald. My father is, I believe, under great obligations to him, and listens, therefore, to his advice, more readily than to that of any one else."

"Do you mean, that Mr. Thornton is under pecuniary obligations to the merchant?" was Mallory's anxious enquiry.

"I cannot say," answered Mary. "I fear he must have debts. You know, Mr. Edward, he was always rather careless; and though our income is not large, he likes to live well. Even Captain Sayers's constant visits in an evening cost more than he remembers. But I must not

blame him, for he may have resources I know nothing of, only it often makes me anxious about the future."

"You need have no anxiety, Mary, if you will allow me to take care of you," said the young man, tenderly.

The girl blushed deeply.

"Ah, but you were far away," she replied; "and I knew not what turn matters might take, during your absence. If Mr. Gerard were my father's only creditor, I should not have been so uneasy; but he has been very often, lately, in the company of Mr. Parkins, the solicitor; and I have a great fear of that man. I have tried not to give way to suspicions, but I have lately had cause for well-grounded apprehensions, that there is some mystery between them."

"I fear no one, but my brother," returned Edward, quickly; "and if you will confess that I have a place in your heart, Mary, I may defy his efforts to injure me."

Mary looked at him, with a smile full of confidence and love, as she softly replied—

"I have never forgotten old times; and your kindness would make me very happy, had I no anxiety on my father's account."

"Mr. Thornton has long been in difficulties; and, you must confess, it has been greatly his own fault," replied Edward.

Mary hung down her head. She could not contradict this, and yet she did not like to admit its truth.

"You are worthy of a better home than Mr. Thornton's house," continued the young man; "and, I am proud to say, I can now offer you one, if you are not afraid to cross the Atlantic."

"I shall not be afraid, Edward, to go any where with you," answered the girl, simply.

"Then, for the future, confide in my protection, as if I were already your husband, and let me hope, that, in a few weeks, I may call you my wife," was Mallory's reply.

But the words were spoken in so soft a voice, that even little Lilly, who was watching from the window for her father, did not catch their meaning; but Mary Thornton heard them, and they sounded again and again on her ears, comforting and supporting her, amidst future hours of trouble and anxiety.

Scarcely had Edward ceased speaking, when Lilly cried out, that there was a strange man looking in at the window.

Mallory's back was towards it, and he had seen nothing; but he instantly sprang up; and, at the same moment, the door of the cottage was rudely flung open. Mr. Oswald Mallory, in a state of violent excitement, then entered the kitchen.

There, after a separation of four years, the brothers, who had parted in anger, again stood face to face.

Every limb of Mary Thornton trembled, as she gazed, with apprehension, from one to the other, and read, in the terrible expression of

their agitated countenances, that the lapse of time had only deepened their unnatural enmity.

But the feelings of the young men were very different; jealousy and malice inflamed the elder, whilst Edward only felt resentment for unworthy treatment; and had his brother, even, at that moment, shown repentance and forbearance, he would readily have pardoned all the past.

But Oswald Mallory was incapable of either. Proud, self-willed, and tyrannical, he had been spoilt from childhood by his father's indulgence, and almost taught to hate his brother, as his rival, and a sharer of his mother's property, which he considered ought to have been his alone.

It was a fearful spectacle—these two men, united by the closest bonds of consanguinity, yet each regarding the other, as his enemy! Oswald stood silent; his knit brows and flashing eyes betraying the terrible passions of his

heart; his face flushed, his veins swollen, and his features distorted by anger, inflamed past all control, when Edward, who had learnt self-governance in the struggles of life, inquired, with resolute tranquillity, for what purpose he came there.

"To unmask a scoundrel!" he replied, "who under the mask of friendship, seeks to ruin the daughter of his early friend—to save an unsuspicious girl from the snares of a villain, and conduct her back to the protection of her father."

"Were we not children of the same mother?" demanded Edward, whilst his face became pallid as a corpse. "Yet you should not address such language to me with impunity, were I alone! this you well know; but forgetting the conduct of a gentleman, you play a coward's part, and offer me insults in a lady's presence."

"Coward! I retort the epithet, which you shall be made elsewhere to answer for!" ex-

claimed Oswald, attempting to grasp the arm of Mary, with the intention of leading her from the cottage.

But she sprang back, for protection, to Edward's side.

"Touch not that lady, sir!" cried Edward, now fiercely interposing; "she has placed herself under my protection, and by all which I hold sacred, if you do but ruffle a fold of her garment, my forbearance will have an end, and you shall have bitter cause to repent your audacity."

"You dare to threaten, sir!" retorted Oswald.

"Call it threatening if you will," was the reply; "but if you persist in this outrageous conduct, you shall find, that though slow to attack, I am prompt to defend. I am somewhat changed since we last met, and no longer the boy over whom you were accustomed to tyrannise."

"I know you perfectly!" was Oswald's

angry reply; "the miserable associate of vagabonds and strollers! Miss Thornton, it is a disgrace for you, even to be seen in the company of this man. Above all, in a place like this. He has brought dishonour on his family, by his low habits, and vile pursuits; and I renounce him for ever. Never more will I call him brother. Your father shall be told of his indecent conduct, in bringing you to such a place as this; and if I cannot save you from the fellow's snares, Mr. Thornton must."

"Neither I nor my father require your advice or interference, Mr. Oswald," said the girl, firmly, though she trembled from head to foot. "You have been forbidden my father's house—you have intruded here unasked—and the sooner you depart the better."

"Are you insolent, too, Miss Thornton?" returned Oswald, with a savage laugh. "I have borne with your coquetry for long; but let me tell you, it may be carried too far; and the daughter of a poor Custom-house Officer

may have reason to repent the hour when she rejected the protection of Sir Thomas Mallory's eldest son."

"This is not to be endured!" was Edward's agitated exclamation. "I may endeavour to curb my wrath, for insults offered to myself; I may support your taunts in silence, from a sense of duty; but insolence to this lady, I will no longer permit. Leave this house instantly, I command you, sir, or, in another moment, you shall be compelled to do so."

Oswald, now enraged past all sense of decency or prudence, swore a fearful oath, and, clenching his fist, aimed a heavy blow at his brother.

Edward, prepared for this violence, evaded, without returning it.

In the meantime, the door of the cottage was opened, and before Oswald could renew the attack, Mr. Gerard stood between the brothers.

"What do I behold?" he exclaimed. "The old curse of Cain in full activity, and the arm

of brother against brother! Shame—shame! when men of education and rank are thus the slaves of passion, how can we chide the untaught children of the poor."

"Mr. Edward is in no way to blame in this dispute," said Mary Thornton, with deep blushes. "Mr. Oswald entered here without even demanding admission, and forced a quarrel with his brother."

"I am not going to stand here to take my trial," exclaimed Oswald, in a voice which passion rendered almost unintelligible. "Nor do I admit Mr. Gerard's right to be my judge. I shall choose my own way of settling this dispute, at another time and place."

So saying, he left the cottage, and banged the door furiously after him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE was a profound silence for more than a minute, in Mrs. West's cottage, after Oswald Mallory's departure.

Mr. Gerard was the first to speak.

"What does all this mean?" he demanded, looking from one to the other of his young companions, with amazement.

"I believe, Mr. Oswald came hither in search of me," replied Miss Thornton, who knew Mr. Gerard too well to be awed by his presence. "Unfortunately, Mr. Edward was here before him, having come to inquire, as I did, after Fuller and his child."

"And he was enraged because he found you together," said Mr. Gerard, gravely.

"We have known each other from our earliest years," said Edward, now interposing; "and I could not remain silent, when I heard Miss Thornton insulted."

"Have blows been exchanged between you?" demanded the merchant.

"I avoided one aimed at me, and had not had time to return it, when you interposed," was the answer.

"Then, by all things sacred, let me implore you, young man, to forget this unholy dissension," said Mr. Gerard. "A curse must wait on brothers' strife, whatever be its cause."

"I have been grossly insulted," exclaimed the young man, "called scoundrel, villain; and I know not what vile epithet beside, has been heaped upon me, in this lady's presence."

"Yet hitherto you have struck no blow?"

"Thank Heaven, I had been able to curb my passion, till you arrived! Another minute, and I must have lost the power to do so longer."

"It is well!" said Mr. Gerard. "Sir, I esteem your firm endurance, even higher than the noble audacity with which, last night, you rescued this little girl from death. It demands the highest moral courage, and power of self-control, to support insult in the presence of Miss Thornton, from an empty, dissolute coxcomb, even though he be your own brother. But I implore you, as you respect yourself, and the happiness of those dear to you, persist in the same noble conduct. Oswald Mallory is not worth your resentment; and should you be roused to lift your hand against him, you will never cease to repent it. Mary Thornton, your words may have more power than mine. Insist on Mr. Edward's promising that he will neither seek apology nor revenge for what has recently passed."

"Oh, Mr. Gerard," said the young man, without allowing Mary time to speak, "before you thus highly tax my patience, you should

remember the old wrongs inflicted on me. Persecuted for years, driven disowned, portionless, and slandered, from my father's house; and now, in the presence of the only woman I ever loved, insolently insulted—to bear all this without resentment, were cowardice, not patience."

"I should admit this," answered the merchant, "were the man who has thus sinned against you other than your mother's son; but being so, lift not your hand against him. Leave him to find his punishment from Heaven, and be assured, that we, in our anger, can inflict no penalty for moral crimes like his, so heavy, as eternal justice has decreed shall harass those unto the grave, who have defied its laws."

Edward, overcome by his contending feelings, sunk on a chair, during this address, and hiding his face on his arm, which rested on a table, he remained perfectly silent after Mr. Gerard had ceased speaking. Fearful emotions

were struggling for the mastery in his breast, till, at length, overcome by his agony, he burst into a violent passion of tears, and his strong frame heaved with convulsive sobs.

"My mother—my poor mother! thank God, she has not lived to this day," were the words which, at length, burst from his lips.

Mr. Gerard looked on, in profound silence, whilst Mary crept near to Edward, and gently took his unresisting hand in hers. The merchant understood, and sympathised with the young man's sufferings; for he, too, had experienced a youth of ardent passions, and keen sensations, and convinced by all he had yet observed of his character, that he would pass through his present trials, strengthened, but not hardened, subdued, yet still ennobled, he felt that he was worthy of all the assistance it was in his power to afford him, at the present critical moment of his career.

"Miss Thornton!" said Edward, at length,

mastering his agitation, and looking anxiously up in her tearful eyes, as she stood watching him, with the deepest commiseration, "I implore you not to despise me for this weakness, for there are pangs which overcome even our strongest resolutions."

"Dear Edward," she murmured, "I know too well, how much you have endured."

"Is father never coming back again?" inquired little Lilly, now taking courage, and looking up mournfully in Mallory's face. "Are you crying because he is gone?"

"Where is your father all this while?" asked Mr. Gerard, eagerly. "I came here on purpose to speak with him."

"They have taken him away," answered Lilly, with tearful eyes.

"He was taken, about two hours ago, before a magistrate," said Mary Thornton, "on a charge of having wilfully set fire to the theatre which was burnt last night."

"But it is not possible that there can be any foundation for such an accusation?" demanded the merchant.

"To my certain knowledge, he left the building before the end of the performance," said Edward, eagerly.

"Had I known this sooner, I would have been present at his examination," returned Mr. Gerard. "It appears to me impossible that the poor man, whose child nearly perished in the flames, can be committed on such a charge. There can be no evidence against him."

Frank Bernard, the lover of Mr. Thornton's maid, Nelly, entered the house whilst the gentleman was speaking, and having quietly closed the door after him, he stood waiting till he was silent, and then said—

"If you want to know anything about what passed at the police office, I can tell you every word, if you will only excuse my rough way of telling a story."

"And will father soon be back again?" demanded the little girl eagerly.

The workman looked down tenderly at her, and laid his hand upon her flaxen hair, but instead of replying to her question, he only shook his head.

"If Mat Fuller speaks the truth, as I believe he does," he said, "there are certain men in this town, who expect such as I am to respect them as gentlemen, and yet have mighty little scruple about swearing to a falsehood."

"What has happened that makes you thus indignant?" enquired Mr. Gerard.

"Well, I will just tell you, sir," said Frank, in reply; "and then if you are not as angry as I am, I shall be astonished. Mat Fuller swears he was in the Black Bull, Inn, and had been there for above an hour, when the fire broke out. The manager's attorney, Mr. Atkins, wont believe him, and the magistrate asks if he has any witnesses. Mat replies

that Mr. Atkins saw him there. Atkins denies that he ever met him before, in the whole course of his life. But Fuller was not abashed."

"He was always a gay hearted fellow," said Edward.

"And very ready, sir," rejoined the workman. "He made a bow to Mr. Atkins, and answered that he was not surprised he had forgotten him, as he had, probably, been some time in the Black Bull, before they met. It was a place, where, he believed, that gentlemen were very apt to lose their memories. Now, as most people there knew that Atkins is no tee-totaller, there was a general laugh, which angered him sorely, and his red nose grew redder than before. Mat then added that Mr. Parkins, the solicitor, whom he saw in the room, could prove the truth of all he says, for he was at the Inn in company with Mr. Atkins, and he had spoken to him, having formerly served his time in his office. This

Mr. Parkins flatly denied, and said that Fuller's story was altogether an ingenious fabrication. He had no acquaintance with Mr. Atkins, he said, and had not seen him for the last six months, except by accident, and added that though he was in the Black Bull the day before, for a few minutes, to inquire for a parcel he expected from the country, it was at least an hour before the fire broke out, and even if Mathew Fuller had been there at the same time, he might easily have returned to the market-place and set fire to the whole town if he pleased, before the first alarm was given."

"And what said the actor to all this?" inquired Edward, eagerly.

"He persisted that when he first went into the Inn, that he had seen Mr. Parkins in the company of Atkins. 'Have you any witness?' was the answer. 'I went to the Inn,' he said, 'in company with Mr. Jones, the manager of the theatrical company at Hurlston. That

gentleman can swear that we had been more than an hour together, when the first alarm of fire was given.' There was a dead silence for a minute or two, in the court, after the actor said this. It was plain that Mr. Atkins, who conducted the case against him, had not expected it; but when he had recovered his surprise, he asked Mat, roughly, if he had such a good witness, why he did not bring him forward. Fuller replied that the manager left the town that morning, and that as he had no apprehension that such a ridiculous charge could be made against him, he was unprepared to meet it. 'Then the sooner you are prepared the better,' was Atkins's insolent reply. Fuller said that as he was perfectly innocent, and there was really no evidence whatever against him, it was a cruel thing to put him to the expense of bringing a witness a distance of sixty miles. People thought then he would have been dismissed, but Mr. Parkins, who was sitting near the magistrate, whispered some-

thing in his ear, and then that gentleman, who is a half-pay officer, and no Solomon, as you know, sir, said that it was a very suspicious case, and that the prisoner must be remanded till Saturday next, for further examination, which would allow him time to call any witnesses he could produce in his favour. The poor actor looked very sorrowful, sir, but before he was taken to the house of correction, he asked to be allowed to write a few words on a scrap of paper. As he passed me, he slipped them into my hand. The note is directed to you, Mr. Edward." And as the workman ceased speaking, he gave a small strip of paper to that gentleman.

It contained these words:—

"SIR,

"The only witnesses who can prove that I was at the Black Bull, are Mr. Jones, the theatrical manager at Hurlston, and

the barmaid of the Inn. They want to get me out of the way to prevent my disclosing a secret which deeply interests you. I was a fool to delay telling you the truth, even for an hour.

"M. F."

Mr. Mallory, as soon as he had read the note, handed it to Mr. Gerard.

"Do you know to what he alludes at the end of the note?" demanded the latter, the moment he had read the scrawl.

"Not in the least," was Edward's reply. "I received a letter from him in London, alluding to a nefarious transaction, by which I had been deprived of certain rights of inheritance, and promising further disclosures, if I would come down here. I hastened my journey in consequence. He failed in an appointment he made, last evening, to meet me in the booth after his performance was over

and I was still waiting for him in the market-place when the fire broke out."

"There can be no doubt of the poor fellow's innocence," said Mr. Gerard, "and it is evident, that the manager, who makes the charge, is a mere tool in this affair. Some one, who, as Fuller says, wants to get him out of the way; but we must bring the witnesses, and have him liberated, as soon as possible."

"You will kindly direct me what steps I am to take in the affair," said Edward.

"Leave the whole business to me, my dear sir," answered Mr. Gerard. "I will employ one of the first, and most honourable solicitors in the town; for, to the pride of England be it said, that, though there are low-minded men and keen practitioners amongst them, yet, take our lawyers as a body, they are possessed of the highest integrity, and gentlemanly feeling."

"Yet their charges are enormous, Mr. Gerard, and even you must admit," returned

Edward, "that poor men are compelled often rather to submit to injustice, than to incur the expenses of law."

"The charge of all professional men, which have risen in proportion to the increase of luxury, is one of the great evils of the present day," said Mr. Gerard. "The rich, so numerous now in England, can, no doubt, well afford to pay the apothecary, the physician, and the lawyer, who keep their carriages; but the poor must renounce their services."

"The poor must emigrate, as I have done," said Edward, laughing; "they must withdraw from the painful struggle with overwhelming riches, and go to some country, where the fortune with which a man is regarded as a beggar here, will suffice to insure him independence and respect—where the simple, social habits of the last century are still to be found, united, with all modern, mental progress, in science, and in knowledge. I advise

all to emigrate, who have strength of mind to be contented with the comforts, without the vanities of life, and who prefer peaceful happiness, and modest plenty, to the anxious, and too frequently, degrading pursuit of riches."

"The middle classes are daily learning the advantages of this only efficient relief for the evils of over population," returned the merchant, "and the poor, especially in the country, who were too ignorant to comprehend the meaning even of the word, attracted by Australian gold, are beginning to quit their wretched homes, and sail to happier lands. Men of hardy enterprise like yourself, Mr Mallory, make excellent colonists; but what would become of a poor, weak, half-starved weaver, or a consumptive tailor, in the back settlements of America?"

"Alone, they would probably perish," returned Edward; "but under proper directions, they, too, have their capabilites, and might

become useful and happy members of a new society."

"You are an enthusiast in the cause, I see," answered Mr. Gerard; "but to return to Mathew Fuller; we must consider how he can be got out of durance vile, for his own sake, and also for yours; and, I confess, I have some curiosity to learn the mystery he professes to be able to disclose. In the meantime, what is to be done with his little girl," he added, looking at Lilly, who, worn out with weeping, had now fallen fast asleep, with her head on Miss Thornton's knee.

"She can remain with Mrs. West," said Edward. "My old nurse is the best creature in the world, and will, I am certain, take the utmost care of her."

"I do not doubt it," said Mary, now interposing; "but this poor little creature, who has never been separated from her father for a day, would soon pine herself to death, in such dull company. I am sure my father will not

be angry, if I take her home with me, and Nelly is merry and kind, and will help me to take care of her."

"I am sure she will, miss, said Frank, who was the good servant's affianced husband, and proud to hear her praises. "I am off work, miss, all day; so, as she is still poorly, I will carry her in my arms up to your house. The doctor said, she was not to walk for a day or two."

"Dear Miss Thornton, I know not how to thank you for this kindness," returned Edward, warmly. "This is real charity, such as Christ enjoined—a gentle ministry of love. No gift of money, however ample, could compare to the benefit you thus confer on the actor and his child."

"She is such an innocent-hearted, affectionate little creature, that I shall be delighted to have her with me," replied the lady, blushing deeply, as she met her lover's admiring gaze.

"I had already thought of this," said Mr. Gerard, "as the best means of reclaiming her from the sad life that awaits her in her present profession; but, unless you had yourself proposed it, Mary Thornton, I should not have ventured to do so. I will take care that your father shall make no objection to her remaining with you; and, I have little doubt, your kindness will be amply rewarded by the child's attachment, and her father's gratitude. I must now go to engage a lawyer to conduct Mathew Fuller's case, and leave you, Mr. Mallory, to accompany Mary and her young charge to Mr. Thornton's house."

So saying, the merchant slipped a sovereign into the hand of Mrs. West, who had now returned, and, saluting the rest of the party, left the cottage.

When little Lilly awoke, she was greatly distressed to learn that her father would not return to her, either that day or the next;

but docile and sensible, she listened meekly to Miss Thornton's gentle consolations, and when she heard, that she was to go with the kind lady, she left off crying, and brushing away her tears, promised to try to wait patiently, till her father came back again.

Edward Mallory then drew the arm of Miss Thornton within his, and Frank Bernard, taking Lilly in his arms, they proceeded to the house of the Custom-house Officer.

Nelly's astonishment was great, when she gave admission to the party, more especially when she recognized the child to be the little dancing girl; but when Frank recommended her to her care, it needed no further explanation, to ensure her kindness to the poor, suffering child.

Edward and Mary Thornton passed the remaining hours of that afternoon, in devising plans of future happiness. The honest Nelly was not less contented in the society of her

betrothed, Frank Bernard, and little Lilly no longer wept, as she lay on Mr. Thorton's parlour sofa, half bewildered by the splendour, of what others thought a homely dwelling, and the sudden change from her father's squalid lodging.

When Mr. Thornton returned to dinner, he was already prepared to welcome Mary's little guest, and Mr. Gerard, with delicate liberality, had obviated the risk of his making any objection to such a visitor.

Captain Sayers came in the evening, and whilst he played at backgammon with his host, the young people were left at liberty to converse of the past and the future.

Frank also came back after tea, to discuss with Nelly the subject of their future marriage. They both regarded such a union as a sacred and solemn engagement, and had waited patiently for years, before they undertook it, in order to save a portion of their earnings, to secure them from future want.

Nelly lived happily in Mr. Thornton's simple household; Frank laboured with intelligence and industry, in a manufactory belonging to a great London association, near the town. His wages he considered adequate to his services; and by his employer's liberal policy towards his workmen, he had leisure hours sufficient to improve his mind, by judicious reading, and attendance at the evening lectures at the Mechanics' Institute. He, and all those who worked with him, were grateful to Mr. Gerard, for the comforts and advantages they enjoyed; and though perfectly aware that there were certain laws, the amelioration of which would greatly contribute to the welfare of the labouring classes, they discussed these subjects reasonably and patiently, convinced that they could never obtain redress by factious violence.

Yet, as Frank told Nelly that evening, there was an impatient spirit of discontent amongst the workmen of other establishments.

"Delegates have been here from London,"

he said, "addressing two of the societies, in very violent language, and urging the men to propose terms to their masters, which can never be accepted. Attorney Atkins was lately one of the loudest advocates of such proceedings; and yet Fuller swore this morning, he met him at the Black Bull, in the company of Mr. Parkins, the greatest Tory in the town. It is too deep for me; but I have long thought these violent talkers are not to be trusted. The poor workmen are, however, mostly deluded by them, for they don't rightly understand their own interests; and they flatter their discontents. Atkins, I feel sure, will never rest till he has brought some mischief about; and who knows, if he is not paid to delude poor, unsuspicious fellows."

"Well, Frank," said his betrothed, "I am glad that you will never have anything to do with disturbances."

"Who can say that," answered the work-

man. "When the stream rushes over the dam, it is not the weed which can float against the current. Times of confusion and trouble are coming, that is certain, Nelly; and we must not marry till they are past. There is your own brother, Ralph Watson, and half-a-dozen others, trying to persuade me to speak at the next meeting, to advise a general strike. But I don't approve of strikes. We never yet got any good by them; and I intend to go down to him, and talk to him in private."

"He is a head-strong, violent man, though he is my own brother," answered Nelly; "he is always grumbling against somebody or another."

"There is often a great deal of truth in what he says," answered the workman; "but he is for going a wrong way, if he wishes matters to be mended. He is too ready to listen to all the half-educated ranters, who go about the country, making a trade of our discontent. It half distracts me, when I think, what

misery follows every ill-advised dispute with the masters; and as long as we are dependent on them, for our daily bread, it seems madness to contend with them."

"Well, Frank, you are very clever," said his promised bride, who regarded him as a perfect oracle; "for my part, I understand nothing about all these things, only I have always seen, that honesty, frugality, and industry, are the best helps to keep out of the workhouse, as your father has done; and I am ready to wait as long as you think right, rather than run any risk of ending our days in what the poor call the Bastile."

"No, no, Nelly, trust me, if I live, neither you, nor your children, shall ever come to that," answered the workman, proudly. "No man, who is not a fool, or a drunkard, need end his days in a workhouse. But you and I have strong hearts, Nelly, and strong arms, and we have a little property saved up, and that is a good beginning. The only thing that vexes

me is, that it is so difficult fora poor man to know how to place his money safely, when he has got it. But I have been thinking of a plan lately, and I will tell you all when it is once clear in my head. But it is getting late, so I must wish you good night."

Nelly let her lover out of the back door about the same time that Edward Mallory wished Miss Thornton farewell; and both mistress and servant, when they retired to rest, were kept long awake by anxious thoughts, as to their own future destiny, and the fate of those most dear to them.

THE END OF VOL. I.

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